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CHAUCERIAN PROSODY: BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

by

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ABSTRACT

The metrical or ametrical nature of Chaucerian prosody is the subject of this investigation. The problem of the syllabication of final -e is considered as a preliminary question. If Chaucer sounded some of the final -e's in his verse then the metrical basis of his prosody is possible. This basis may be metrical and yet not be formed according to a principle of strict and undeviating regularity.

The method employed in this investigation of Chaucer's prosodic base is twofold: An examination of metre in itself, and an examination of the prosodies that were part of Chaucer's background. The prosodic advances in the cultures which formed part of Chaucer's background were assimilated and adjusted by his adaptive genius into the Teutonic mold of his native tongue. A picture of the methods of versification prevalent in the Latin, French, and Italian of Chaucer's period points to the origin of his own method.

The findings of the study indicate that the metrical basis of Chaucerian prosody is the most probable, although the iambic pentameter or tetrameter nature of his lines yields to more frequent irregularities than later became the custom in English verse. These irregularities are explained by analogies with foreign prosodies and Chaucer's need to evolve a prosody of his own in the English vernacular.

CHAPTER I

PROSODY IN GENERAL

The word prosody has been defined as the science of versification or the theory of metrical composition. The English word is derived from the Latin word prosodia, which means "the accent of a a syllable."

Some difficulties with regard to Chaucer's prosody are general problems about which there is disagreement among prosodists. Prosody is an admittedly difficult study. As George Saintsbury writes:

The great difficulty attending the study of English prosody, and the cause of the fact that no book hitherto published can be said to possess actual authority on the subject, arises from the other fact that no general agreement exists, or ever has existed, on the root-principles of the matter.[1]

Although certain principles, such as nomenclature, meet with fairly general agreement, the application of these principles to special cases varies according to the subjective interpretation of the prosodist. Moreover, and this I think brings about the chief difficulty, words are used with but vaguely defined, or undefined, meanings. The word "cadence" is an example. This is an important word in treating of Chaucer's work, but it is constantly used with varying and undefined meanings. A line may be scanned in various ways by different read-

ers. Some people read poetry in a sing-song voice which emphasizes

the underlying metrical scheme to the detriment of sense or feeling.

Other readers stress meaning while subordinating measure. Proso-

dists scan according to the metrical pattern or according to the pattern

of speech, thus giving divergent readings of the same line. There is

disagreement about secondary accents on words of many syllables,

or whether a monosyllable can bear a stress.

Eleanor Prescott Hammond gives reasons, aesthetically weighted,

for not following a metrical pattern with mathematical exactitude:

English speech throws its major stresses upon the root-element of
substantives, adjectives, and verbs; the iambic pentameter line has
in theory five such stresses or heavy elements and five light or less
important syllables, arranged alternately. In practice, an exact
following of this pattern is not demanded; not only may the fall of
verse-stress upon secondary syllables reduce the amount of gram-
matical stress in the line, and the appearance of important mono-
syllables in unaccented position change the balance of the line, but
in all good verse this variation of the ripple, this shift of weight
within the line, is sought by the artist.[2]

The underlying metrical pattern of verse is frequently called the

base. Once established by the poet, it need not be followed invariably

with respect to every syllable of every line. Enid Hamer writes:

A poet in composing has at the back of his mind, sometimes quite
consciously, sometimes unconsciously, an abstract and quite regu-
lar rhythmic pattern, which we call the base of the poem, and which
consists of a series of weak and strong beats of pulsations, independ-
ent of words altogether. Upon this he shapes and measures his lan-
guage. He seldom reproduces the base exactly in words, but what
he must do is so to order the movement of his phrases as to communi-
cate the base to the hearer's mind also, and to give him the pattern
against which to measure the actual rhythm which he hears.[3]

This persistence of the base, even when subject to numerous excep-
tions, may be demonstrated by George Saintsbury's treatment of
Tennyson's line from the "Brook":

> Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.

Saintsbury devotes three pages to discussing the various possible ways
of scanning this line, and concludes:

The foot arrangement makes no difficulty, needs no _privilegium,_ and
necessarily applies none. The line is at once recognised by the ear
as a good line and correspondent to its neighbours, which, as a body,
and also at once when a few have been read, informed that ear that
they were five-foot lines of iambic basis. Therefore it will lend itself
to foot-arrangement on that norm. The five feet may be iambs, tro-
chees, anapaests, spondees, tribrachs, and _perhaps_ (this is a ques-
tion of ear) dactyls and pyrrhics. These may be substituted for each
other as the ear shall dictate, provided that the general iambic base
is not overthrown or unduly obscured.[4]

Since some prosodists have denied that Chaucer used an iambic
base for his poetry simply because every line of his did not scan with
undeniable iambic accuracy, the concept of a general base which per-
sists through exceptions, provided it "is not overthrown or unduly ob-
scured," is of significance in this study.

Disagreements in scanning among prosodists are due at times to
one reader emphasizing certain syllables which another reader will
consider unstressed. Monosyllables are generally treated as unac-
cented words but when they occur in the stress position of the metric
pattern their position lends them a special weight which Dr. Albert
Harp Licklider called "pitch-accent."[5] According to Dr. Licklider

such syllables, whether they are prepositions, indefinite articles,
or verbs, are given a new power by their position under ictus. This
stress is observed in scansion but not necessarily in reciting a poem
aloud.

Problems in scansion are augmented by uncertainties as to pro-
nunciation. This is particularly true with reference to Middle English
where the pronunciation of all words has not been established beyond
doubt. Scholars sometimes disagree on where the word-accent should
fall. Moreover, there is evidence that even the same word could ad-
mit of different pronunciations. Paull F. Baum devotes several pages
to an analysis of Chaucer's pronunciation, particularly with reference
to word-stress. He writes:

Somewhat analogous are the rimes which require a shift of the normal
accent. Chaucer enjoyed in fact a certain latitude in the accentuation
of many words. Proper names were likely to vary: words of French
origin are often accented either way (e.g., pite, pitous, nature, vertu,
servaunt, etc.); so also prepositions and adverbs like unto, thereof;
also whilom; and so on. Certain other words could be accented either
way: félawe A 648, feláwe A 650; manhoód A 756, mánhood Tr. II 676.
Many words which are normally trochaic become iambic in rime;
míllere A 545 but Millére A 542 in rime; dággere A 392 but daggére
A 113 in rime; so likewise window A 1075, A 3676; forheed A 3310,
A 154; answere D 910, E 2266; chaffare B 138, 139; miteyn C 372,
373; Thomas D 1832 in the same line. Cf. Bigýnnyng F 717, but
bígynnyng A 3007 in rime.[6]

Baum is writing, for the most part, of rhyming words, because the
similarly sounded endings of lines give a clue as to their pronuncia-
tion. Margaret Schlauch treats of the same matter from a slightly

different angle when she writes:

The generally unambiguous accentuation of verse lines permits us to
observe that stress was in a state of flux in Chaucer's time, so that
he was free to treat many dissyllables, for instance, as either iambs
or trochees: thus, cónjure or conjúre, párfit or parfít, depending on
the needs of the line.

If there are divergences in the scanning of lines in modern English

because various readers use different criteria in measuring accents

and feet even when there is no question as to pronunciation, there are

more differences of opinion regarding the scansion of lines in Middle

English where the normal word accent may be unknown or variable,

where the text may be altered, and where one must account for changes

due to time, locality, or foreign influences.

Robert Bridges has said that Milton scanned his verse one way,

but that he read it in another. This is simply to say that the metrical

base and the intonation of normal speech differ, a fact which has al-

ready been emphasized. John Thompson explains the difference very

clearly:

The disagreements about Milton's scansions, like most disagreements
about metrics, arise from failures to distinguish clearly the three
separate sound patterns of metrics, first, the abstract metrical pat-
tern, second, the pattern of normal speech, and third, the pattern of
the line of verse.[8]

This remark is peculiarly pertinent to our topic, since efforts to scan

Chaucer have varied for just the reasons Thompson gives. Confusing

the abstract metrical pattern (which is just an underlying base) with

the pattern of normal speech leads to divergent scannings of his

poetry. But, with Chaucer, we have the additional and crucial prob-

lem of deciding what was normal speech in his day.

In an effort to make the approach to metrics less subjective and,

consequently, more scientific, Henry Lanz employed acoustical in-

struments to measure stress and duration in the reading of poetry.

The results showed wide variations in the rendering of sounds, depend-

ing on the reader. From these and other investigations, he concluded:

From the preceding paragraphs we see that a metrical scheme is
never strictly followed in the practical composition of poetry. Only
trisyllabic meters show a constant, uninterrupted regularity. But
such rhythms deviate considerably from the nature of our normal
speech and approach rather the nature of a song.[9]

Lanz found that rhythms in "the nature of a song" tended to regular-

ize metre. Sidney Lanier advocated the use of musical notation as a

means of giving exact durations, emphases, and rests. This method

has had fair success, and even Southworth, one of the most radical

objectors to formal metrics, felt that it was an aid in demonstrating

the relative values of words, that is, their values in stress and, par-

ticularly, in duration. It was used by the ancient Greeks, and so the

idea is far from new. However, the method, useful as it is, has not

been popularized. One objection to it is that music, as written, is

an exact mathematical science. The durations of the notes are in mea-

surable ratios, while the loudness and pitch can be measured in decibels

and vibrations. Poetry, measured with such accuracy, would be mechanical. English words are not all of the same syllabic length or stress.

However, the rhythmic scheme of poetry may be shown by musical notation, and this system is helpful in establishing a pattern. Lanier[10] demonstrates his method by putting notes to--among other poems--the first four lines of Chaucer's Knyghtes Tale, taking his text from the Ellesmere Manuscript, six-text edition, Chaucer Society. (See page twelve.)

This system employs the same mensuration as music. The 3/8 time signature means that the basis of measurement is an eighth note (♪ or ♪) and that there are three eighth notes or their equivalent to each bar. A quarter note (♩ or ♩) has the value of two eighth notes. In several of the bars there are sixteenth notes (♬ or ♬), two of which are equal to an eighth note. In his sample, Lanier does not have any rests. He employs an accent to show stress.

It may be remarked that Lanier divides Chaucer's lines into five feet, using rising rhythm--that is, the stress on the even syllables. He also assigns a sound to -e, as in olde, which he treats as two syllables. In other words, he sets out the poem as iambic pentameter.

The terminology of prosody is derived from Latin, which, in turn, came from Greek. In English, iambus means an unstressed followed

by a stressed syllable in the same foot of two syllables. This is generally indicated by the symbols $\underline{/\,u\,/}$ for unstressed and $\underline{/\,-\,/}$ for stressed. In Latin, the iambus was a short syllable followed by a long syllable. In Greek there was a difference of pitch in the two syllables. Consequently, the terminology still in use in English is completely foreign in origin and misleading in its application. Since the sixteenth century embraced classical terms with such unbridled enthusiasm, this terminology has been adopted into English and given its new meaning. M. A. Bayfield writes:

The Iambic line corresponds to our heroic line in being the staple measure of Greek Tragedy and Comedy. From a failure to distinguish between Metre and Rhythm, it was in Roman times, when Greek prosody was little understood, supposed to be composed of iambi. . . . To this fundamental error, which was shared and handed down by Horace (Ars Poetica, 251, ff.), and blindly accepted by the literary world at the Revival of Learning, the present hopeless condition of English prosody is largely if not entirely due.[11]

The change from Greek to classical Latin metre, from classical to later Latin, and then to the metres of the vernaculars sprung from Latin, involved a change not only of pronunciation, but of the fundamental concept of what constituted a metrical pattern. Nevertheless, the nomenclature remains almost unchanged. Because languages differed, while prosodic terms remained the same, it is not easy to verify their exact meaning at any given literary time. By examining the poetry available to Chaucer, one can at least become aware of the type of work known in his day and attempt, by deduction, to discover

the method of versification prevalent or emergent in the period.

The basis of Chaucer's prosody has recently been called into question. Whether he merely counted syllables, letting the accents fall where they might, or if his versification was based on equal stresses arranged in an iambic or trochaic pattern, has been the subject of much controversy. James G. Southworth does not believe that Chaucer used a metrical base. He writes:

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and most of the nineteenth centuries, poets recognized the rhythmical tradition of Chaucer, although they themselves became increasingly under the dominance of the metrical. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, scholars began to suspect the tradition accepted by the poets and began to try to make Chaucer a "correct" poet, a correct poet being one whose decasyllables were, theoretically at least, in iambic pentameter. Urry was the first to attempt to apply to Chaucer metrical criteria which had their origins with the sixteenth-century humanistic study of classical meters; but his efforts bore little immediate fruit. Tyrwhitt suggested a different metrical basis--the endecasyllabic, but the untenability of his suggestions was exposed by Nott in 1815. It is clear from the Biographia Literaria that Coleridge agreed with Nott. Not until the studies of Child, Ellis, Schipper, Ten Brink, and others, however, was the rhythmical nature of Chaucer's prosody again challenged. It will be apparent from the present study that because of a lack of historical perspective, and because of the use of unsupported assumptions and faulty logic, these scholars succeeded in imposing on Chaucer and his followers the myth of a metrical prosody.[12]

Now, although prosody covers more than metre, or rhythm, the metrical or non-metrical aspect of Chaucer's poetry will be the main object of my investigation. Since direct examination of Chaucer's lines has led or may lead to ambiguous readings, the approach adopted is that of an examination of the possible metrical background existing

in Chaucer's day. If it can be established that poetry in English or other languages known to Chaucer had a metrical basis, then the assumption that Chaucer's own works had such a basis is greatly heightened. When facing the problem of Chaucer's prosody for which the inherent evidence is inconclusive or controversial, one may find supporting evidence in his prosodic background.

In scanning lines, I shall follow a method whereby the base serves as a matrix above which speech accents, and then rhetorical emphases, are placed. This metrical base is beneath syllabic weighting, as it were, and allows for the positional accentuation of monosyllables advocated by Dr. Licklider. English prosody must accommodate its large number of monosyllables. Ictus and accent, when the word bears one, should coincide, but an unaccented syllable may be accounted for by giving it temporary positional stress. This applies to the underlying metrical base and not to the manner of reading poetry. Confounding these two separate elements has led to much inconsistency in scanning. The method of oratorical delivery, that is, the manner of applying rhetorical or speech stresses, should be distinct from the method of stressing syllables for metrical purposes. As John Thompson writes:

For as it is generally recognized today, there is in any line of verse a degree of difference between the pattern of stresses which the words and phrases would have as they might occur in the language of speech, and the pattern of stresses in the metre.[13]

Enid Hamer, in the quotation given in this chapter, considers
the metrical base "independent of words altogether." The rhetorical
emphases of speech may be distinct from the metrical emphases of
verse. One word or another may be stressed in declamation, but the
"weak and strong beats or pulsations" are heard, either directly or,
once established, as a counterpointing effect, "the pattern against
which to measure the actual rhythm which he hears."

Metre is a patterning. In English the pattern is formed of stressed
and unstressed syllables in some recurring order. Some variation in
the pattern is permitted and even aesthetically desirable once a base
has been established. To establish a base it should be sufficient that a
word does not have an accent working against the metrical pattern even
though this word would normally be unstressed in everyday speech.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Whil-om	as old-	e sto-	ries tell-	en us
	There was	a duc	that hight-	e The-	se us
	Of Atth-	en-es he	was lord	and gov-	er- nour
	And in	his tym-	e swich	a con-	que- rour.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF CHAUCER'S PROSODY

It is remarkable that Chaucer's prosody should have become, in our time, the subject of lively debate. As with most prosodic problems, the issues are not always clearly defined, but the debate is waged along various lines of approach. Two principal questions are asked, the answers to which range from complete negatives to complete affirmatives. Did Chaucer attempt to employ regular metre in his poetry? Should the final -e be sounded in reading Chaucer's poetry, or counted in scanning it? The two questions are interdependent, since the answer to one affects the answer to the other. Unless we can decide what to do with final -e, we cannot even begin to scan Chaucer's poetry.

Until the nineteenth century it was generally assumed that Chaucer's verse was irregular. Dryden's opinion was shared by many:

The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but 'tis like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was auribus istius temporis accommodata: they who lived with him, and some after him, thought it musical; and it continues so, even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lidgate and Gower, his contemporaries: there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine: but this opinion is not worth confuting; 'tis so gross and obvious an error, that common sense. . .must convince the reader that equality

of numbers, in every verse which we call <u>heroic</u>, was either not known, or not always practised, in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise.[1]

When Dryden wrote that no pronunciation could make thousands of verses other than lame, he was not sounding the final -<u>e</u>'s of many of these verses. Urry's edition of Chaucer, published in 1721, suggested that these -<u>e</u>'s were sounded. Southworth, as quoted in the previous Chapter, has summarized the ensuing developments. In criticizing Chaucer's metre, most authors assumed that he was attempting to employ a regular pattern. Today, scholars such as James Southworth deny even the metrical intent.

The "discovery" that sounding the final -<u>e</u> led to a fairly regular reading of most Chaucerian lines caused the critics to reconsider his prosody. Sides were taken in the controversy by E. T. Donaldson,[2] who believed that the -<u>e</u> should usually be sounded, and James Southworth,[3] who believed that the -<u>e</u> should rarely be sounded. Southworth has since declared:

I now think that we were both wrong, the reason lying in the fact that we had both accepted the iambic decasyllabic verse as the basis for Chaucer's prosody.[4]

<u>Verses of Cadence</u> is one of the latest books in English to be devoted entirely to the subject of Chaucer's prosody. In it, Southworth sums up the views of preceding critics, discusses their theories and

arguments, and concludes by giving as his own view both that Chaucer's final -e should not be pronounced, and that Chaucer had no intention of using a regular metre in his poetry. His denials seem too far-reaching to be valid, although he does marshal many facts in their support. Moreover, some of his arguments appear to be based on a predisposition to reject regular scansion in poetry, as well as to adopt a certain modern dislike for classical metres.

Definitive answers to the two questions given on the first page of this Chapter may never be possible. No less an authority than C. S. Lewis expressed a doubt that the matter would be solved when he wrote:

What exactly he /Chaucer/ did I doubt if we shall ever know; but it seems likely to me that he attempted a compromise. On the one hand, he followed the French in having (usually) ten syllables in a line, and sometimes he had five full stresses, thus attaining the modern deca-syllabic tune.[5]

Although we may never know for sure, a re-examination of the evidence, and an attempt to interpret Chaucer's own views on versification should yield fresh results. The situation is somewhat similar to that of a musician who is told to play a piece "the way Bach intended it to be played." Somehow, the omniscient critics assume they know Bach's intentions. No doubt we should read Chaucer's lines the way he intended them to be read; but Chaucer's intentions not being always self-evident, we must endeavour to discover them by indirect means.

Ezra Pound, whose influence on poetical trends was greater than his personal stature as a poet, has waged a determined battle against

the iambus. The majority of modern poets rejoice in their emancipation from exact metrical rendering, preferring to use rhythmical groupings instead of syllable counting and measuring. This is part of the literary cycle which has passed through several quadrants since Chaucer's day. It would be unreasonable to impute twentieth-century attitudes to fourteenth-century poets. The literary scene was different. Chaucer was initiating a new era, bringing to English readers names, stories, and techniques formerly known only to other cultures, if at all. He laboured over his translations, studied his models closely, gathered information by all means available to him, and then presented his poetry in a form adapted from many sources but stamped with his own peculiar genius.

Any effort to appraise his prosody could benefit from an examination of the prosodic development of his time. That is, in order to ascertain his metrical objectives, one could examine his opportunities for awareness of current prosodic advances in English, Latin, French, Italian, and other languages. This appraisal of the prosodies of various cultures with which Chaucer was familiar may clarify the background for the prosody he himself evolved. By revealing the state of poetic development that Chaucer found when he began to write, one can place in clearer relief his prosodic similarities with the available poetic models of his day, or realize his deliberate divergences from them. No attempt is made here to ascribe to any poetic system an infallible

relationship of cause and effect. For example, whether Chaucer

derived his octosyllabic line from the French or the Latin from

which the French line itself was derived, or from the four-beat line

of Old English by adaptation, is not the question here so much as the

fact that this line existed and formed part of his prosodic background.

Rather, the intention of this paper is to show the existence of various

methods of versification prevalent in Chaucer's day, from which he

was free to choose his own methods. His degree of indebtedness, if

any, to each system will not be weighed. When Chaucer was aware

of poetic methods which he chose not to use, as, with but few excep-

tions, was the case with alliterative verse, this very rejection of a

method is informative since it increases our knowledge of his prosod-

ic preferences. The problem of his metre (which again includes the

problem of final -e) is related with this general background, which

is given in an attempt to throw further light on the metrical practices

of his day. If it can be shown that a regular metrical pattern existed

in the prosodies of literatures which he knew, the assumption that

Chaucer himself attempted a regular metre is greatly heightened.

What his exact intentions were may never be definitely ascertained;

but the weight of probability is increased by this background evidence.

The edifice of English poetry which Chaucer built rests upon founda-

tion stones laid by Anglo-Saxons, Normans, and Romans. If the origin

of each stone is not immediately obvious it is because the rock was metamorphosed by his adaptive genius. Before examining these foundation stones and their excrescences, it may be well to clarify the nature of the problems involved in Chaucer's prosody by considering some of his lines. These could be chosen from any of his works. However, there is no doubt that the Canterbury Tales represent his fullest prosodic development and, therefore, show his most mature concept of versification. The General Prologue opens with the famous line:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

which I give as edited by F. N. Robinson in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer.[6] About this line, Paull F. Baum remarks:

For a long time editors printed Aprille, thus adding the extra syllable. But Manly (111, 421) has a long note which evidently convinced Robinson and he now in his second edition reads Aprill.[7]

On reading this line, one is struck by the lack of uniform stresses. Assuming Aprill to be accented on the last syllable, that to be given a stress (although some prosodists do not stress it--no doubt following the pattern of normal speech rather than of metre), and a caesura after Aprill, one still is brought up short by "with his shoures." This is suggestive of what Gerard Manley Hopkins called "sprung rhythm," which shall be mentioned later. However, Robert D. French, in his edition of the Canterbury Tales, gives the same line as:

> Whan that April with hise shoures soote[8]

in which the two rising syllables are not together. Scanning this line

in the conventional way, we have:

Whán thát / Áprill // with hí/se shóu/rés sóo/te.

In order to make this scansion, the -e of hise, and the -es of shoures,

must be sounded. Whether the -e of soote is sounded or not would not

affect the rhythm in this case, although it does present a problem of

its own with regard to Chaucer's prosody. The Ellesmere Manuscript,

six-text edition, Chaucer Society, has the line:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures swoote

which Lanier[9] has scanned (equivalently, in musical notation):

Whan that /April /e with/ hise shou/res swoot-e

Lanier has considered -e or -es as a separate, sounded syllable in

three cases out of four. It is to be noted that he treats hise as one syl-

lable.

Thus, in examining just the first line of the General Prologue, we

have at least three different printings with three different scansions. A

great number of variations are possible. For example, the spelling of

"April" has been given as Aperil. The first difficulty in approaching the

study of Chaucer's prosody is Chaucer's text. It is known that his poems

were written out by scribes whose copies may or may not have satisfied

their author. Judging by "Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam, His Owne

Scriveyn," his dissatisfaction appears more likely. In editing the Can-

terbury Tales, scholars have added or omitted final -e's according

to their preconceived opinion of Chaucer's metre. An attempt to

scan the lines, as given in their editions, reinforces their original

interpretation, since this interpretation dictated the spelling. This

is reasoning in a circle and does not throw any light on the real prob-

lem, namely, what did Chaucer intend?

As can be seen, the pronunciation of final -e's within the line,

and not every -e but just certain ones, makes a great difference in

the metre. It could be sprung rhythm, or iambic pentameter, or even

trochaic pentameter. It could be without a regular metrical reading.

Possibly syllables were counted without regard to stresses. And if

syllables were counted, how many were there? All these questions

depend for a solution upon the sounding or not sounding of final -e.

In an effort to weigh the evidence for and against pronouncing -e, I

shall devote one chapter to this subject alone.

Again, let us look at the opening lines of The Knight's Tale, as

given in F. N. Robinson's second edition of The Works of Geoffrey

Chaucer:

> Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
> Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
> Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
> And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
> That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
> Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;
> What with his wysdom and his chivalrie,
> He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
> That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
> And weddede the queene Ypolita

Sounding most of the final -e's within the lines regularizes these lines in such a way that they fall into iambic pentameter without diffi- culty. There is one exception, namely, the sixth line. But it can be accommodated into the pattern by using synaloepha or elision. The lines, then, may be scanned as follows:

Whilom / as ol / de sto / ries tel / len us

Ther was / a duc / that high / te The / se us;

Of Atth / en(es) he / was lord / and gov / er nour,

And in / his ty / me swich / a con / querour,

That gret / ter was / there noon / under / the sonne.

Ful ma / ny a ri / che con / tree had / de he wonne;

What with / his wys / dom and / his chiv / alrie,

He con / quered al / the regne / of Fem / enye,

That whil / om was / ycle / ped Scith / ia

And wed / dede / the queene / Ypol / ita

This scansion is suggested, using strict metrical patterning as the base over which the normal speech pattern can be laid. The iambic base that emerges with ease in the majority of lines, and with some adaptation in others, does not contradict the accentuation of Chaucer's day. Some words, such as "under," have a stress contrary to present- day pronunciation. Whilom, a favorite word near or at the beginning of the Miller's, Cook's, Clerk's, and Merchant's Tales, is one of

those mentioned by Paull F. Baum (and listed in Chapter I) as being

accented on either the first or last syllable. Secondary accents were

also counted, as in "Ypolita," where the final "a" would be given a

slight stress, second only to "po" in force. The final e preceding a

word beginning with a vowel or an aspirate should be silent.

In declaiming or reciting, perhaps with musical accompaniment,

a court entertainer of Chaucer's day would not emphasize the regular

rises and falls. That would have rendered the lines monotonous.

Moreover, as Tyrwhitt observes: ". . .the defect, or redundance,

of a syllable might be easily covered in the recitation, especially if

accompanied as it often was, by some musical instrument."[10] Al-

though musical accompaniment was not as common in Chaucer's time

as it had been in previous periods, there is no doubt that the poems

were recited, and it is quite possible that they were sometimes sung.

Ruth Crosby has written two papers[11] in which she outlines the custom

of oral delivery in the Middle Ages. Among other points, she draws

attention to the line in the Epilogue of the Troilus, where the poet

says:

And red wherso thou be, or elles songe.

In reciting, as in reading from the manuscript, a sort of counterpoint-

ing could have taken place, whereby the stresses of the base inter-

changed with the rhythms of speech and verse.

However, if the final -e of such words as olde, highte, and
tyme was not sounded in the lines quoted above, this metrical
scheme I have outlined is impossible. The very fact that the metre
emerges when the -e's are counted as syllables, and does not do so
when they are silent, is a strong argument in favour of their pro-
nunciation.

From an examination of these lines, the extent of the problem
facing any student of Chaucerian prosody can be gauged. Some light
might be cast on it by verifying the major tendencies shown in all
his other lines, but again these tendencies often exist only insofar
as the reader ascribes them. That is, if a frequency of decasyllabic
lines is found, the number of syllables counted depends on the reader's
decision to count or omit final -e. Again, there is -e within the line
or -e at the end of a line of verse to be considered. With Chaucer,
the problem of his metre is further compounded by unanswered ques-
tions concerning language, pronunciation, usage, spelling, and sylla-
bication.

Did Chaucer intend his lines to be in five feet, with rising stresses,
or not? If the -e's are all mute the iambic hypothesis is untenable.
There is another possibility, namely, that he was following the Dipody
Law and varying the iambus with a trochee or even an anapaest. It
is possible that he was, in such a word as "whan" in the first line of

the General Prologue, making use of an _anceps_--a syllable which in Latin prosody may be long or short at will.

Proponents of the syllabic theory believe that Chaucer counted only syllables, regardless of stresses, after the manner of medieval French poetry. They would find the number of syllables variable, depending on the sounding of final -_e_. The main question: Did Chaucer have a metrical basis for his prosody, is linked with the subordinate but essential question: Did Chaucer sound final -_e_ in his poetic lines?

CHAPTER III

MUTE OR SOUNDED -E?

It has been made sufficiently clear why the phonetic treatment of

final -e is of major importance in the study of Chaucer's prosody.

Courthope synopsizes the history of English e's in these words:

The tendency to assimilate sounds shows itself most strongly in sub-
stantives and adjectives, by the disappearance of the various vowel
endings before the growing power of the letter e. Pressed on the
north by the immigration of the Danes, and on the south by the neigh-
borhood of the Normans, the Anglo-Saxons found an increasing diffi-
culty in communicating their thoughts by means of inflected words. .
. . All-absorbing as Aaron's serpent, the vowel e swallowed up the
a and u which, in the early stages of the language, had been used to
mark declensions. . . . After thus disposing of all its rivals, it
reigned supreme through several centuries, exercising a predominant
influence over the prosody of the language; but gradually yielding
itself to the power of contraction, it became torpid and finally mute.[1]

At one time in the history of the English language the final -e of many

words was sounded. It was thus somewhat similar to the final -e in

German, or the -e of French poetry. Since communications were poor

and speech customs varied from one area to another, the final -e con-

tinued to be pronounced in some parts of England after it had ceased

to be heard in others. The exact time at which this e ceased to be syl-

labic in London speech is a controversial matter. Margaret Schlauch

writes:

CHAPTER II

2. INTRODUCTION

As for final unstressed -e, this sound, it is agreed, had already disappeared in the North by the middle of the fourteenth century, and Chaucer's dialect was losing it rapidly. It was regularly elided before a following vowel, often dropped before a consonant.[2]

According to Schlauch, then, final -e was in the process of becoming soundless in Chaucer's day. F. N. Robinson also believes that final -e was sounded at this time although it was afterwards not pronounced. He does not attempt to assign an exact time to this "afterwards." He writes:

Chaucer's language, then, is late Middle English of the South East Midland type. As compared with Anglo-Saxon or some of the other dialects of Middle English, its inflections are simple and offer little difficulty to the reader of today. But many words retained a syllabic -e, either final or in the ending -es or -en, which afterwards ceased to be pronounced, and the vowels had in general their present continental rather than their English sound.[3]

Southworth, on the contrary, asserts that scholars agree that -e was no longer sounded in Chaucer's day. He states:

I think most scholars agree that in the London speech of Chaucer's day final unaccented -e had died out, and that Chaucer's use of it was a conscious archaism. . . . I now find highly unrealistic the concept current among traditional linguists that Chaucer purposely used a more archaic English in his verse than in his prose. Poets simply do not work in this way, nor did the earlier investigators think so.[4]

If Chaucer's dialect was in the process of losing final sounded -e as Schlauch asserts, the practice had not yet become archaic; but if final -e had "died out" as Southworth states, the question of poetic usage still remains. Schlauch remarks:

Prose discourse must surely have been ahead of more conservative poetic usage, especially in the North.[5]

Southworth ignores the fact that there is such a thing as a poetic

language. Wordsworth's later struggle to win public acceptance for

his theories regarding the use of the language of the common man in

his poetry, a struggle not always successful, shows how deeply the

idea of a special poetic diction had taken hold. That an older form

of English should be used in poetry than in prose was not uncommon.

For example, Albert C. Baugh in his <u>History of the English Language</u>,

writes:

The sixteenth century saw the establishment of the personal pronoun
in the form which it has had ever since. In attaining this result three
changes were involved: the disuse of <u>thou</u>, <u>thy</u>, <u>thee</u>. . . .[6]

If "<u>thou</u>, <u>thy</u>, and <u>thee</u>" fell out of use in the sixteenth century, why

does Shelley, in the nineteenth, begin a poem with

<div align="center">
Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert.
</div>

Examples of the use of "thou" right up to the beginning of this century

could be found. This is because the singular pronoun of the second per-

son was retained in poetry although it had ceased to be used in everyday

speech. Keats' line "To one who has been long in city pent" could hard-

ly be called the language of daily speech. Shelley and Keats wrote after

Wordsworth had popularized the idea that the language of poetry should

be the same as the language of men, and yet they still employed terms

that were more poetical than prosaic. In the eighteenth century, a

poetic diction had evolved wherein the language of verse differed from

the language of prose. In Chaucer's day, as Eleanor Hammond points out, "England was speaking a language not yet conscious of itself, a language in which no great poet or prose-writer had yet arisen, of which there were neither grammars nor dictionaries, a language which had not only no literature and no critic, but no tradition and no stand-ards."[7] Therefore, Chaucer had to form his own poetic language, his own techniques, his own prosody; under such circumstances, his use of an "archaic" pronunciation of final -e seems entirely possible.

The prevailing use of French for works and communications of a cultural nature from the time of the Norman conquest until Chaucer's time, placed English in temporary obscurity, hence literary English did not develop at a normal rate. While the language of daily speech is subject to more rapid change than the written language, in the case of Middle English the written language lagged very far behind the lan-guage of every day because of the period during which all the major writings were in French. English not having been culturally active, Chaucer picked it up, as it were, more or less as it was laid down well over a century before. The lapse of time was curtailed by the lack of use.

Until Urry's edition of Chaucer, published in 1721, the possibility of regularizing Chaucer's lines by sounding some of the final -e's, had not been suggested. It is to be noted that Urry was writing in the period

where "correctness" was the highest attribute of verse. In order to make Chaucer "correct," his lines had to be made even and smooth. The suggestion, once made, was received with enthusiasm since it provided a key that opened the door to Chaucer's versification. Whether or not Chaucer used the same key is still controversial.

Scholars, in discussing final -e, usually treat it as an inflectional ending surviving in orthography, if not in pronunciation, from the former English period when it was in grammatical use. Albert H. Marckwardt[8] approaches the question from another angle, and makes a very useful observation. He reproduces twenty-seven lines from the Prologue, lines 487-614, and analyzes the origins of the nouns ending in e. He finds the greater number of such words to be of French origin, so that the endings are not inflectional. The e-ending was present in such words when they were adopted into English and they were dropped, if at all, only after 1450. Marckwardt does not draw the immediate conclusion his argument suggests, namely, that Chaucer, in using such French words, would be justified in observing the French custom of sounding an otherwise mute e when it was contained in a line of poetry, even though it was not sounded in daily speech. The pronunciation would not be "archaic" since the e in such French borrowings was retained until at least 1450, a half-century after Chaucer laid down his pen.

With reference to the remaining words, those ending in e and not of French origin, Marckwardt writes:

Chaucer was writing poetry, and it is conceivable that if two forms of a word existed, one in general use and the other a slightly more archaic form, he would choose whichever one fitted his purpose at the time. To this extent we may suspect that the poetry of Chaucer, or of anyone else during this period, is a step behind the colloquial language.[9]

Mute e is the subject of much discussion, even in French. Although a consideration of French prosody will be undertaken in a subsequent chapter, a remark from a book published as recently as 1956 may be in place here. Jeanne Varney Pleasants, in the Preface to this book of over three hundred pages, of which mute e is the sole topic, points out:

Mais ce qui plus encore a retenu notre attention, c'est l'étonnante divergence d'opinions des orthoépistes, phonéticiens, esthéticiens, auxquelles sont venues s'ajouter, ces dernières années, celles des phonologues, sur le timbre et les autres caractéristiques de la voyelle [e] par rapport aux deux voyelles antérieures labialisées connues sous le nom d'eu ouvert et d'eu fermé. Que ce soit dans des manuels de prononciation, dans des ouvrages de pure recherche, dans des études d'esthétique et de versification, les contradictions abondent d'un auteur à l'autre et, souvent, chez le même auteur.[10]

It is interesting to note that the disagreements in English concerning the sounding of final -e have their parallel in modern French arguments concerning this single vowel. If a definite decision cannot be made with respect to the pronunciation of a living language, which can be heard and measured, how much more difficult is the formulation of a decision regarding the sounds of fourteenth-century English!

Courthope believes that Chaucer's final -e in verbs and nouns should be pronounced:

When, through the genius of Chaucer, the French iambic movement
was naturalized in the Middle English, the triple movement, inherent
in the old style, instinctively gave way before the new tendency.
Great numbers of iambuses and trochees were formed, partly by
importation of French words, partly by the pronunciation of the final
-e in verbs and nouns, as the symbol of the former inflections.[11]

It is most logical that Chaucer, in writing his English lines, should

have availed himself of various aids to forming a metrical pattern,

one of these being the addition of an unstressed syllable where the

metre required it. Even if he did not use metre, but rhythm, as South-

worth thinks, this extra syllable would have been helpful. If -e could

provide such a syllable, and if its use could be justified on historical

or literary grounds, it is unlikely that he would hesitate to employ it

even though it was unsounded in daily speech. Critics, such as South-

worth, who deny Chaucer's metrical intention, proposing a rhythmical

scanning (if such a term can be applied to rhythm) of his lines, do not

make it clear just how he established a rhythmic flow. It is quite pos-

sible that Chaucer did at times use what Southworth calls rhythm, but

that he did so to the exclusion of any other method is far from being

proved. Although regular metre depends in Chaucer's case on the

sounding of final -e, the converse is not necessarily true. Whether

employing rhythm or metre, Chaucer may have counted the syllables

containing otherwise mute e.

Some prosodists have been accused of adding an -e, or sounding

an -e already present, in a very arbitrary way. If it is once agreed

that the e should be sounded sometimes, it is less difficult to decide

where it is advisable to do so. Evidently, the final -e preceding a

word beginning with a vowel should be silent. This Chaucer would no

doubt have observed, considering his indebtedness to French and Latin

prosody. But in other cases, it is possible to regularize almost any

line by filling in the gaps with syllabic e's. If the nature of the line

and its general pattern are discernible, and the only obstacle to a satis-

factory reading is the sounding or not of final -e, it is reasonable that

Chaucer would make use of the necessary syllable. Eleanor Prescott

Hammond believed that some of Chaucer's e's were pronounced. She

writes:

Speaking a language in which the inflexional -e was still a separate ele-
ment, Chaucer could conform his narrative to iambic rhythm more
simply than can the modern poet; and in a full-stressed line he moves
with a lighter tread. He has, normally, a high percentage of regular
iambic lines, about fifty per cent of his work in each case; and heavy
lines are not common! [12]

There are lines which no amount of re-arranging or explaining by eli-

sion, hiatus, pauses, or Middle English pronunciation, will make regu-

lar; but over fifty per cent of Chaucer's lines is a greater number than

chance would dictate, and strongly supports the hypothesis that Chaucer

intended certain -e's to be sounded. Moreover, fifty per cent of his

lines would be a sufficient number to establish a regular metrical

base so that the remaining number of lines could be explained as allow-

able divergences from the regular pattern of stresses. As we have

seen, it is not necessary for every line to be regular in order to

maintain the counterpointing effect of a base sounding through its

exceptions.

The practice of John Gower, Chaucer's contemporary, is analyzed

by Macaulay in the Introduction to his Complete Works of John Gower.

Macaulay lists many words ending in -e where he believes the -e was

sometimes sounded. Page cxxiii ff. gives a summary of the types of

words that Gower pronounced as two syllables when the second syllable

was the final -e. Macaulay adds the expression "all occasionally as

dissyllables" to indicate that Gower's practice was not invariable.

In this respect Chaucer's contemporary seems to have followed the

suspected custom of Chaucer, namely, of sometimes sounding final

-e and sometimes allowing it to remain mute.

While the final -e of words within the line must be pronounced in

the majority of cases, if Chaucer's poetry is to scan regularly, the

-e at the end of the line would constitute an extra syllable if sounded.

In other words, internal -e's are needed to give five feet, or ten syl-

lables, to the lines of the Prologue, but -e at the end of the line often

brings the syllable count to eleven. When -e is an extra syllable,

should it be sounded?

The evidence supporting the hypothesis that final -e within the

line may form a syllable of its own has been given; -e at the end of

the line presents a problem of a different type. It is not necessary
to the metre; in fact, its superfluity apparently makes the metre
faulty. If the purpose of sounding -e within the line was to obtain the
required number of syllables, it would seem that, by the same reason-
ing, Chaucer would refrain from sounding the final -e of a line when
it was redundant.

Let us consider his lines on the Prioress, taken from the General
Prologue. The following is from Robinson's second edition:

> There was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
> That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
> Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;
> And she was cleped Madame Eglentyne.
> Ful well she soong the service dyvyne,
> Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
> And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
> After the Scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
> For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.
> At mete wel ytaught was she with alle:
> She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
> Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;

Eight of the above lines end in -e. In every case the final -e is extra-
syllabic if we attempt to assign ten syllables to the line.

$$\breve{} \quad / \quad \breve{} \quad / \quad \breve{} \quad / \quad \breve{} \quad / \quad \breve{} \quad / \quad (\breve{})$$
> At me / te wel / ytaught / was she / with all (e).

Tyrwhitt believed that Chaucer was using the Italian hendecasyl-
lable in such lines. However, when Dante wrote in endecasillabo,
every line had eleven syllables, not just one here and there. If Chau-
cer had wanted to write eleven-syllabled verse in English, one would
expect him to make every line conform to the number. Again, if

Chaucer's method consisted in counting syllables rather than stresses as the advocates of the French School insist, the number of syllables should be constant. If we sound the final -e's, they vary from ten to eleven. Now, if we consider Chaucer's lines in the General Prologue to be in iambic pentameter, the stresses--with some adjusting--rise regularly. The final stress is in its required position. The sound of e at the end is but a breath, a sort of vocalic pause. It is to be noted that other unstressed syllables are not used, only e. Sidney Lanier has summed this up concisely:

Now, that this final e at the end of Chaucer's lines was mainly a sort of audible remission of the breath having the rhythmical effect noted in the last scheme from Chaucer seems to be clearly the result of the following considerations:
(1) that Chaucer evidently did not intend this final e at the end of each line to have the full force of a syllable, else he would have used more of other terminations than e in the same place: or in other words his tendency to confine the sound to that of the final e, which was already becoming a sound that could be slurred at pleasure, shows a peculiarity in that sound which must have suited his rhythmic purpose;
(2) that this rhythmic purpose did not demand a full syllable at the end of the bar, as shown by the large numbers of such lines as the four quoted from the Knight's Tale which have no final e;
(3) that the pronunciation and rhythmical effect herein given harmonize with these kinds of lines, for the lines not terminating in a final e would admit a similar audible remission of the breath--as we hear it used by many readers of the present day.[13]

Whether or not the last e was sounded, does not, then, interfere with the regular scansion of the lines. According to other examples given in his work, Lanier believes that in such cases a little time is sub-tracted from the last beat and lent to the e so that the time of the whole

bar remains the same. In other words, he would, in his system,

have given "with alle" the following musical notation:

3/8 ♪ ♪. ♪

with al - le
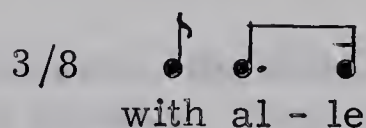
The bar has three beats, distributed among an eighth note, a dotted

eighth, and a sixteenth note. The value of a dotted eighth is one and

one-half beat, and of a sixteenth, one-half beat. The final -e, in this

musical representation, is not extra, but included in the time.

Lanier's theory is ingenious and certainly appropriate. However,

if one wishes to consider the last syllable (if pronounced) of Chaucer's

lines as an extra syllable, this need not be construed as undue poetic

license. Feminine endings have always been common in English poetry.

Shakespeare later used them frequently. In French, some metrical

schemes require the alternation of masculine and feminine endings.

In speaking of French prosody, the word "feminine" is used in a gram-

matical sense and not as in the case of the English term where the same

word means an unaccented syllable at the end of a verse. The English

feminine ending may be any combination of vowel and consonant, or

vowel alone. In French the feminine ending denotes grammatical gen-

der and always consists of an e. There are feminine nouns in French

that do not terminate in e, but e is the feminine ending. Chaucer's

practice, therefore, strongly resembles the French.

That an extra syllable is not unusual in English verse, is a matter

of general agreement. Enid Hamer, in treating of English meters,

explains:

From the beginning, however, the end of a line was susceptible of
the addition of an extra syllable. This syllable was in English almost
invariably unstressed, and turned the last foot into an amphibrach,
x / x. The final amphibrach has remained common all through the
history of iambic verse except in the couplet verse of Pope's period,
when it was rare.[14]

That the concluding syllable of a line of verse should be e was also

common. George Saintsbury in his History of English Prosody, draws

attention to the preponderance of final -e syllables in Early Middle

English verse. In the section on the Ormulum he writes:

Another point which may be just worth noting in relation to Orm is
that, as anybody who cares to look at the poem will see, a vast
majority of the fifteenth syllables are made up by the final e which
is indeed the case with the final syllable of all Early Middle English
verse![15]

Chaucer, then, was not initiating a practice unknown to writers

who preceded him, nor setting a precedent unobserved by his poetic

successors. It is most probable that the final -e of poetic lines was

given a slight sound. There is no evidence, internal or external, to

prove this. Whether silent or pronounced, final -e of poetic lines

did not alter the metre of the line itself. In this respect it differs

from -e within the line.

CHAPTER IV

METRE

Metre may be defined as a recurring pattern. In English poetry the pattern is formed by repeating combinations of stressed and un-stressed syllables. In French the number of syllables is counted, but stress is of little significance. In classical Latin, the pattern is formed by grouping long and short syllables in a repetitive order. What-ever the medium, metre is the regular recurrence of a particular qual-ity.

Since Chaucer's work is in English, and since English is charac-teristically an accentual language, any investigation of his metre should emphasize the recurring accents in order to see if they form a pattern. It is not necessary for this pattern to be in poetic use today, although nearly all English poets since Chaucer have been influenced by him and have benefited by his poetry in such a way that their subsequent works embody many of his innovations. Moreover, the form of Chaucer's poems differs from one work to another, which shows, if nothing else, that he was experimenting with different types of poetry, adding or re-ducing syllables, making stanzas of varying length, attempting new effects. We are familiar with the ten-syllable and eight-syllable lines

he wrote because English poets have used them ever since, but some of his nine- and seven-syllable lines have puzzled prosodists, as, for example, lines 1054 and 1066 of the House of Fame, which have seven syllables, unless one assigns two syllables to "while" in 1054. Both lines are similar, and it would appear that Chaucer wanted to emphasize the first word of the line by pausing after it, and, as it were, giving it an extra beat. In line 2076 of the House of Fame, there appear to be nine syllables, even when "every" is counted as two, not three, syllables. This gives the impression of motion "from mouth to mouth" and may have been an intentional effect rather than a fault in syllabic count. If such lines really have only nine or seven syllables, that is, if they are correctly recorded, the pronunciation is accurate, and elision, hiatus and other factors are taken into consideration,--all of which is highly questionable--then it is possible that Chaucer was experimenting with new forms which he himself may have later discarded. His works reveal great variety. When contrasted with those of his contemporaries, Chaucer's versatility becomes obvious. Of Gower, for example, Saintsbury remarks:

Gower requires much less notice than Chaucer, for the simple reason that, great as is the bulk of his work in English, it is, with trifling exceptions, all written in one metre.[1]

We may note, in passing that Saintsbury assumes that Gower used metre in his works. It is unlikely that Chaucer, who was his poetical

superior, should have failed to do so. Macaulay, in his edition of

Gower's works, also speaks of Gower's metre. "The smoothness

and regularity of Gower's metre has been to some extent recognized."[2]

And Macaulay quotes with approval the lines from Schipper which

show which type of metre Gower used, namely syllabic-accentual:

Dr. Schipper in <u>Englische Metrik</u>, vol. i. p. 279, remarks upon the
skill with which the writer, while preserving the syllabic rule, makes
his verse flow always so smoothly without doing violence to the natu-
ral accentuation of the words, and giving throughout the effect of an
accent verse, not one which is formed by counting syllables.[3]

The different metres, the names of which have come to us from

Greek through Latin, are characterized in English by the position of

the stress. Unstressed followed by stressed, in that order, constitu-

tes an iambus. If, in a succession of lines, we find a majority of

feet with the falls and rises always in the same order, there is no

reason why we should deny the term metrical to such lines. True,

English naturally falls somewhat into an iambic pattern due to the

fact that most words have root stresses and they are generally pre-

ceded by monosyllables such as the articles. In the simple sentence:

An apple cannot ripen under trees, we have an iambic pattern with-

out any intention of composing poetry. The native stresses readily

form such a pattern. However, in carefully composed lines of verse,

when the accents regularly fall in a recurring pattern, we find it

probable that such an arrangement was the poet's intention, all the

more so if he at times uses a trochaic or anapaestic arrangement for which the argument of native stresses, at least after the Old English period, does not hold.

There have been many disagreements about metre, and divers ways of scanning the same lines of poetry. It seems to me that these differences of opinion are chiefly due to a subjective treatment of the words, placing emphasis where speech or eloquence would place it and not according to a fundamental metrical pattern. A sort of mathematical detachment is required so that the basic rhythm of a line may be recognized while, at the same time, the overtones of meaning and feeling are given. This is more obvious in Latin than in English. I think that scanning in another language is easier than in one's own because this detachment is more readily obtained. Feelings aroused by words, that is, connotations rather than denotations, are kept to a minimum and the sheer mechanics of the line are observed without hindrance. The counterpointing effect of classical Latin verse is like the polyphonic music so popular in the Middle Ages. The ictus regularly marks off the metre; the quantities recur in feet or metra, while the natural accent of the words, agreeing, as a general rule, with neither ictus or quantity, falls where it may. The whole is complicated, but the trained ear is delighted by detecting the synchronized elements.

Southworth, who does not believe that Chaucer followed any metrical pattern, mentions that his lines can be read with a metrical accent

or a rhetorical accent:

It is obvious that the following examples can be read in two ways,
one with a metrical accent, the other with a rhetorical accent.
Since there is little evidence in the poetry of Chaucer's contem-
poraries, or, as I hope to show, in that of his disciples, for a
metrical accent, I think it unlikely that Chaucer employed what
did not exist in English, French, or Italian at the time he wrote
or before.[4]

In my opinion, Southworth is confusing metre with rhetoric. If metre

is an underlying pattern, it need never be heard. It is a base on which

the other harmonies sound. They may not agree with it in time or in

tone. Syncopation gains its charm from the effect of displacement it

produces, an effect which would be impossible if the expected place

were not known. Polyphony also gains its attraction from the various

tones which are heard more clearly than the base which, nevertheless,

is essential to their position. Southworth, like some other prosodists,

confuses regular patterning with what should be heard. The metrical

accent is a grille on which other patterns are placed. It is not the

poem, but part of its fundamental structure. The remarks about lack

of metre in English, French, or Italian before or during Chaucer's life,

will be considered when the prosodies of these languages are examined.

Southworth, moreover, does not mention Latin poetry which had become

accentual by Chaucer's day. Southworth may have the satisfaction of ex-

tending the left foot while the army extends the right, and then saying

that soldiers do not march in time.

The doubtful treatment of final -e makes a definite scanning of Chaucer's verses out of the question. That is, to decide on the pattern of his lines, one must count all final -e's as syllables, some final -e's, or none at all. In each case, the result will be different. This is not Chaucer's fault, nor is it ours. However, as I have attempted to show, the weight of evidence points to the sounding of some final -e's and the omission of others. Moreover, Lanier's suggestion that the e syllable did not require full metrical timing to pronounce but was slipped in, or slurred, so as to maintain the musical beat, enables the reader to scan the lines regularly. Many prosodists, in fact the greater number of them, particularly nineteenth-century prosodists, have considered the majority of Chaucer's lines to be in iambic pentameter or tetrameter. He has other poems in which he experimented with the French forms of ballades, roundels, and virelays, a fact which Alceste makes clear in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. Some of the ballades we now have are of doubtful authorship, and of the great number that Chaucer is said to have composed, few have come down to us. An examination of the ones that have been considered authentic reveals a harmonious handling of accents that cannot have been the result of accident or of natural English stress unchanneled into metric form. The roundelay with which the Parliament of Fowls concludes is enchantingly lyrical:

Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake,
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,
Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:
Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake.

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
Sith ech of hem recovered hath hys make,
Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake:
Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake,
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

And with the soutyng, whan the song was do
That foules maden at here flyght awey,
I wok, and othere bokes tok me to,
To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey.
I hope, ywis, to rede so som day
That I shall mete som thyng for to fare
The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare.[5]

Now, wel / come, som / er with / thy son / ne soft(e),

That hast / this win / tres wed / res o / ver shak (e),

And driv(en) / away / the long / e nyght / es blak (e)!

By making "driven" one syllable, and many -e ending words two syl-

lables, the pattern emerges with almost complete regularity.

I do not suggest that Chaucer is always completely regular; but

the very fact that numerous lines are so, demonstrates that he knew

and practised metrical rules, or evolved them for himself. The ex-

actitude and regularity he aimed at are not those of eighteenth-century

poets. The greater poet is Chaucer, in that he varied his accents to

avoid monotony and for special effects. He seems to have introduced trochees or spondees into his lines just for the sake of breaking the constant rhythm that would otherwise grow wearisome. Headless lines are found in his works. All these aspects of his prosody have been analyzed and examined by numerous prosodists in great detail. Every word of his writings has been subject to close scrutiny. For this reason I do not reproduce line after line here. I wish, however, to point out that in the system he constructed for himself, having no true master in his own tongue, he allowed himself a greater freedom than has since become the accepted rule in English. His practice suggests an analogy to the metres of Latin, where feet in the same line could vary from iambic to trochaic, or where the first syllable of a line could be long or short, or, in later Latin, accented or unaccented, at will. This does not mean that Chaucer was not metrical, but that his metre differs from that which became standardized in later centuries.

Dame Edith Sitwell, after quoting the first eight lines about the Monk in the General Prologue, beginning with "A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrye, " writes:

This has a splendid masculine quality, but, at the same time, a kind of bucolic roughness and an absence of subtlety. The caesura or brake does not fall in its varying places of design, I imagine, or with any true sense of feeling for its result. These enjambed couplets, when they are enjambed, have a country joviality, and are not like the full-blown enjambed couplets of Keats. This must not be taken in any way as a depreciation of that great poet Chaucer, since I yield to nobody in reverence for him. I mean, only, that the form was not, in that early time, perfected.[6]

Although one might argue that Chaucer certainly did have a true sense of feeling for the result, and that some of his lines have been so subtle that critics are still discussing their true meaning, the "bucolic roughness" is admissible. But chiefly, may we say, Dame Edith is right about the form not being perfected in Chaucer's day. To compare him with Keats, as if the lapse of four hundred years had done nothing for English prosody, is a bit absurd. If Einstein stood on the shoulders of giants, so did Keats; and Chaucer was one of those giants. But, the form was not perfected, as she said. And this imperfection, if such we may call it, or undeveloped state, or-- better still--difference, is what makes Chaucer's prosody hard to analyze. It should not be judged in comparison with later work but, if anything, with preceding works, because this will reveal the immense strides taken by Chaucer. In a later chapter I shall attempt to show the body of work that served as a precedent and possible model for him.

Another method of discovering Chaucer's intentions, is to examine his own remarks with reference to poetry. That he was preoccupied with syllables, with feet, and with metre, is evident from his references to these terms in his poetry. In the Prologue to the Monk's Tale, he writes:

> Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bookes maken us memorie,
> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Unto myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
> And they ben versified communely
> Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.
> In prose eek been endited many oon,
> And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse.[7]

Here we find a reference to the six-foot line called hexameter. This

proves that Chaucer had considered, at least, the subject of feet. Then

prose is contrasted with metre, by which presumably, he means poetry.

If he knew about feet, and about metre, it would be strange if he did not

embody his knowledge in his work. In Troilus and Criseyde he again re-

fers to metre:

> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I bieseche![8]

Chaucer fears--and with good reason--that his "little book" will be

miswritten, that is, no doubt, misspelled. He also fears it will be

"mismetred." Now, something must be in metre before it can be put

out of metre. It cannot be suggested that it be not read out of metre if

there is no metre to retain. These lines form an internal evidence of

Chaucer's having used metre. "...it would be a considerable deroga-

tion of Chaucer's intelligence that he had no clear notions of meter, no

system. That he had a standard is plain from his prayer at the end of

the Troilus" writes Paull Baum[9] who then quotes the lines above

from Troilus and Criseyde. With regard to syllabication, there are

the well-known lines from the House of Fame:

> O God of science and of lyght,
> Apollo, thurgh thy grete myght,
> This lytel laste bok thou gye!
> Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,
> Here art poetical be shewed;
> But for the rym ys lyght and lewed,
> Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,
> Though som vers fayle in a sillable;
> And that I do no diligence
> To shewe craft, but o sentence.[10]

These lines indicate clearly that Chaucer counted his syllables. Baum

suggests that his "failing" a syllable was probably intentional rather

than the result of lack of skill. Whatever the reason, at least Chaucer

knew when the number of syllables was not regular. They do not prove

that he used an entirely syllabic method, as some critics have inferred,

but that he was aware of the number of syllables in a line, and believed

a certain number, which he did not always attain, to be expected.

Chaucer's works, from the Book of the Duchess to the Canterbury

Tales, contain verses of eight syllables and verses of ten syllables.

These numbers predominate, although some lines seem to have an ex-

tra syllable and some to lack one. Again, he has stanzas of eight lines,

and stanzas of seven. Of the latter, George Saintsbury says, with re-

ference to the "Complaint Unto Pity":

For here we have, beyond reasonable doubt, the first English
piece in the great Rhyme-Royal, or seven-lined stanza of deca-
syllables rhymed ababbcc, which Chaucer afterwards brought
to such perfection, and which long held the premier place among
our stanza forms.[11]

On the same subject, Émile Legouis expresses a similar apprecia-

tion:

Chaucer used the new line alternately in stanzas and in couplets,
the stanza for songs and the couplet for narratives. He cast it in
moulds unknown to his country--the roundel, the virelay, the
ballade. Out of all his essays two came to dominate: the seven-
lined stanza (ababbcc), to which his name has since attached, and
the couplet.[12]

Nowhere, perhaps, is Chaucer's awareness of metrical matters

made more evident than in his Tale of Sir Thopas. This is a satire on

the vulgar romancers. The satire is reinforced by the metre, which

parodies that of the romances. When our Host calls it "rym dogerel"

he is also giving Chaucer's opinions of many of the writings of his

day. A man who did not know the use of metre could scarcely parody

it in others. The Tale of Sir Thopas will be examined in more detail

in Chapter VI in reference to Chaucer's Teutonic background.

It would seem like stressing the obvious to insist on Chaucer's

use of metre if the very fact of his having done so had not been dis-

puted in the last decade. In attempting, however, to explain his method

in his own words, one must be cautious about attaching present mean-

ings to fourteenth-century words. Their denotation may have changed

since then. The word foot was an ambiguous term, perhaps due to the

difference between a foot and a metron. Paull F. Baum, in an effort

to search out Chaucer's poetic method, mentioned the word rhythm

as another example of word change. In fact, apart from change, this

word is loosely used even today and it is not always easy to be sure

of the exact meaning attached to it. Baum writes:

What we should most like to have is some pronouncement, some indi-
cation, or at the least, some hints, from the poet about his theory and
his practice in the writing of verse. And we have none--almost none.
For example, our word rhythm did not exist for him.[13]

And in a footnote to this passage, he explains: "The earliest citation

in NED is c 1557; even then it is hard to distinguish from rime." Al-

though Beare says: "The term 'rhythmic' goes back to Bede, but in

considering where he got it, and what he meant by it, we find ourselves

drawn back irresistibly to that other problem, the nature of Latin verse

itself."[14] While Baum was on the subject of puzzling words, he could

scarcely have omitted reference to the most puzzling one of all in

Chaucer's works, namely, cadence. Of it he writes:

One word has baffled nearly everyone. In HF the Eagle, promising
the poet some reward for his hitherto ill-founded writing about Love,
reminds him that he has applied what little wit he has
        To make bookys, songes, dytees,
        In ryme, or elles in cadence.   HF 622-23.[15]

He also points out that the word is used nowhere else in Chaucer.

Southworth was so impressed by this word that he named his entire

book Verses of Cadence, where he thought cadence and rhythm were

the same thing.

Now we have two puzzling words juxtaposed, one being used to explain the other. If _rhythm_ did not exist for Chaucer, _ryme_ may have had something of what we mean by _rhythm_. Baum says that "The word _rime_ (noun and verb) occurs some thirty times, usually in the sense of writing or speaking in verse. . . ."[16] Whether or not we give _ryme_ a meaning other than its present one of similar sounding words, we have the problem of deciding what _cadence_ means. The words and their meanings are of great importance in understanding Chaucer's prosody. The Eagle told him his works were in ryme, or cadence. If we knew exactly what these words signified, we would know Chaucer's method of writing. For several years I have puzzled over the meaning of _cadence_ and noted the use various authors made of this word, copying quotations which contained it for the sake of comparison. Its meaning, except in music, is generally vague, and the word is used loosely. In musical terminology, however, a cadence is the end, final or semi-final, of a phrase or section or melody in music. The cadence is defined as perfect authentic, or plagal. Its connection with poetry might be that the words were often set to music. Also, there is a similarity in the fact that cadence refers to an ending of some type. In the case of poetry, it could be the end of a line or stanza.

The conclusion of a line or period in Latin prose was generally called a clausula. Since a clausula is also an ending, there may be a

similar meaning for both words, with added musical connotation for cadence. The word <u>cadence</u> is derived from Latin <u>cadere</u>, "to fall." A fall cannot occur without a preceding rise. Hence rising and falling may refer to stress or accent or quantity. The conclusion that <u>cadence</u> refers in some way to the Latin <u>cursus</u> or <u>clausula</u> was formed independently from a study of the evidence. Southworth himself, after writing his <u>Verses of Cadence</u>, issued a supplement to it[17] in which he came to the same conclusion. He still insists, however, on calling the cadence rhythmic rather than metric.

William Beare, in <u>Latin Verse and European Song</u>, discusses Latin prose rhythm which, he believes, may have been a forerunner of medieval rhyme. Some of his remarks throw light upon our subject in general and on <u>cadence</u> in particular:

Within the last fifty years the study of prose-rhythm has been actively pursued, and some of the problems which it raises are connected with those which have concerned us most closely in our attempt to understand the nature and development of Latin versification. Did accent play a part in determining the forms of the clausulae? Can one speak of ictus with reference to prose? Are we to look to rhythmic prose for the source of that characteristic feature of medieval verse, rhyme?[18]

This quotation shows that the study of prose period endings may have affected medieval line endings. If not in poetry, then certainly they affected them in prose. Moreover, a transfer from rhythmic prose endings to poetic endings, and hence to an entire poetic line, is possible. Beare continues:

Moreover the writing of Latin prose was affected by the medieval cursus, which had been revived about the twelfth century and laid down accentual rules governing the endings of sentences.[19]

A cadence seems, without doubt, to have been an ending to a period.

In the cursus it was generally the close of a prose period, but its

rules could have affected the endings of lines of verse. Beare uses

the word cadence in this sense.

It is possible, too, that Chaucer, in dividing his works between

ryme and cadence, was taking into account his poetry and his prose.

After all, the translation of De Consolatione Philosophiae was deemed

a major piece of work. The House of Fame was written between 1374

and 1385, and the translation of Boethius made around 1380. If the

Boethius work had already been translated at the time the Eagle spoke,

it would be most unlikely that he would omit reference to so extensive

a literary work. Consider Chaucer's choice of words to describe his

literary output. He had written in poetry and also in prose. Ryme

and cadence would include and describe all his literary productions.

Whether ryme means rhythm or rhyme, or both, it could repre-

sent poetry. Cadence means ending or fall, and from the fourth century

on this ending was usually accentual. It was the ending to a period of

prose, but in metre. Consequently, the word can represent prose or

metre.

I, therefore, suggest as a possibility that Chaucer was including

his prose works when he used the word <u>cadence</u>. This is an hypothesis, but I believe it coincides with the known facts on the subject. There are other possibilities almost equally plausible once one considers a cadence in the light of the Latin clausula.

As a summation of this investigation of Chaucer's use of metre, the following points may be noted:

(a) Chaucer's lines may be scanned metrically if final <u>e</u> is sounded.

(b) He was familiar with metrical terms and, therefore, was in a position to apply them.

(c) Chaucer counted syllables.

(d) Chaucer used the words <u>ryme</u> and <u>cadence</u> to contrast rhythm and metre, or to represent poetry and prose.

CHAPTER V

LATIN POETRY

It has been customary for critics to outline the career of Geof-
frey Chaucer under the headings of French Period, Italian Period,
and English Period. The predominant influences manifestly affect-
ing his works of each of these three periods and the nature of the
writings themselves, lend weight to such classifications. Neverthe-
less, the lack of recognition of a Latin Period is noteworthy. Even
though there was a rising interest in the vernaculars so recently
sprung from the parent tongue, Latin was still the language of learn-
ing. The majority of scholarly works were written in Latin, and the
rules of Latin rhetoric and grammar were considered essential to
a good education. That Chaucer received a good grounding in Latin
at St. Paul's Cathedral School, London, and, later, at one of the
Inns of Court, which recent records imply he attended,[1] is most
probable in view of the emphasis on Latin studies at the time.

The translation of Boethius is assumed to have been made around
1380, the middle of Chaucer's Italian Period, but the Latin influence
cannot be confined to this date. Apart from his educational background
and the numerous Latin authors he had read, Chaucer was exposed to
Latin psalms, hymns, and sequences in the church services he attended.

In order to investigate the effect upon his prosody of the Latin

poetry he had learned, it will be necessary to consider the nature

of the Latin poetry known to fourteenth-century readers and listeners.

There was, in Latin, a continuum of prosodic development, any phase

of which could be represented at the time. J. W. Halporn, Ostwald,

and Rosenmeyer, in <u>The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry</u>, write:

> Before learning the general rules of Latin prosody, it is essen-
> tial to realize that the Latin language changed in respect to the syl-
> labic quantity within the following epochs: the Early Republic, of
> which the most important authors were Ennius, Plautus, Terence,
> and, because of his archaizing tendencies, Lucretius: the Classical
> Period, which begins roughly with Catullus, and which, though its
> characteristics are founded in many later writers, may convenient-
> ly be regarded as ending with the second century A.D.; and finally
> Late Latin, both Christian and pagan, from ca. A.D. 200 to 580
> (death of Cassiodorus).[2]

The Christian poets and liturgists, in hymns and chants, brought the

change in Latin prosody to a distinctive accentual form which culminated

in the twelfth century. At the same time, classical models were still

imitated and the ancient verse forms kept alive. When we consider

that Latin was the common language of Western Europe in the twelfth

century, the importance of its influence on the vernaculars which sprang

from it and on the prosody which it embodied and continued to develop is

inestimable.

Chaucer was exposed both to the classical verse forms and to the

new so-called rhythmic Latin lines. His translation of Boethius' <u>De</u>

<u>Consolatione Philosophiae</u>, although made in prose, is evidence of his

familiarity with the classical Latin style which Boethius favoured.
Later, Chaucer used some material from Boethius in his <u>Troilus and
Criseyde</u>, Book II. Metrum V of <u>De Consolatione Philosophiae was</u>
also put into verse for his poem "The Former Age."

Classical Latin prosody was based, not on accent, but on quanti-
ty. Many of the terms originally applied to Latin metres later were
adopted to describe accentual verse, and this has led to some confu-
sion since the same terms have, historically, been given entirely
different applications. The authorities on Latin prosody disagree on
various issues but with reference to the quantitative nature of classi-
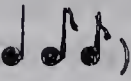cal Latin poetry there is almost complete unanimity.
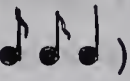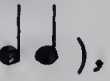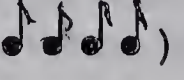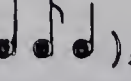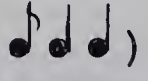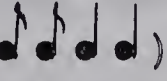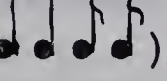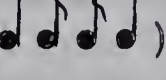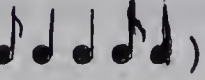
In quantitative verse a pattern of long and short elements is formed.
By arranging the vowel sounds in the order required, and by observing
a prescribed decorum in the choice of an appropriate metre, Latin
poets strove to create the literary effects they desired. A long syl-
lable was considered to be about twice the duration of a short syllable,
and in certain cases two short syllables were considered the equivalent
of one long one. The patterning of feet, of metra, as the case might be,
could take simple or very complex forms.

In musical notation, if we represent a short syllable by a quaver
or eighth note (♪), then a long syllable may be considered as a crotchet
or quarter note (♩). Fairly recent studies with acoustical instruments

have recorded the duration of syllables. When scientifically mea-
sured their ratios were different from those of music which is notated
and measured with exact mathematical precision, whereas the length
of spoken syllables yields to subjective differences. Nevertheless,
the musical notation is an aid to understanding the basic rhythm of
verse. This method cannot be applied to Latin as readily as to English
or some other living language because the pronunciation of classical
Latin cannot be tested mechanically. However, the fundamental ratio
of one to two is generally accepted for short and long syllables, al-
though with the reservations mentioned.

We may then consider the classical Latin metres according to the
number of eighth notes involved. For example, the iambus consisted
of an eighth note and a quarter note; that is, a short syllable followed
by a long syllable. This would give the equivalent of three eighth notes
since two eighth notes are equal to a quarter note. The chief Latin
metres may, accordingly, be listed as:

(1) Three times: iambus (♪♩), trochee (♩♪), tribrach (♩♩♩)

(2) Four times: dactyl (♩♪♪), anapaest (♪♪♩), spondee (♩♩),
    proceleusmatic (♪♪♪♪)

(3) Five times: cretic (♩♪♩), bacchiac (♪♩♩)

(4) Six times: ionic a minore (♩♩♩♩), ionic a maiore (♩♩♪♪),
    choriambus (♩♪♪♩)

(5) Eight times: dochmius (♩♩♩♪♪)

There are many other metres in Latin. At the conclusion of The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry[3] under the heading "List of Meters," no less than sixty-five different Latin types, some of them with additional subdivisions, are given; but all are combinations of long and short syllables.

Greek prosody does not seem to have influenced Chaucer directly. However, since all the meters of classical Latin poetry, except the Saturnian, are based on Greek prototypes, the Greek influence was indirectly present. The smallest unit of metre in Greek poetry was the metron, while in Latin it was generally the foot (pes). An exception occurs in the case of lyric iambs and trochees, for here the Latin poet frequently composed in metra. Professor M. Ostwald, in his section of The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry, makes this clear:

Lyric iambs and trochees are very common in Roman comedy; but they are not mixed with cretics and bacchiacs as frequently as they are in Greek drama. However, iambic and trochaic periods usually alternate with iambic and trochaic periods of different length: e.g. in Horace, Epodes 2, an iambic trimeter alternates with an iambic dimeter. Moreover, while sequences composed entirely in cretics and bacchiacs are rare in early Greek, they are very common in Plautus. Latin lyric iambs and trochees differ from those of spoken verse in that they follow the Greek pattern more closely and are composed in metra rather than in feet, except for comedy, where the habit of composing spoken verse in feet also carried over into sung verse.[4]

Two feet were equal to one metron, except in the case of the dactyl which was considered as a foot as well as a metron. The number and type of feet in a line gave the metre its name, such as iambic quaterni-

us, iambic senarius, iambic septenarius, (also called iambic tetrameter catalectic), iambic octonarius (iambic tetrameter acatalectic). The trochaic metres are similarly named. Of particular interest is the trochaic septenarius, which is really a catalectic eight-foot metre. The classical Roman poets favoured this metre for dialogue. Plautus and Terence used it frequently. The Christian poets, such as Hilary of Poitiers and Venantius Fortunatus, also maintained the trochaic septenarius.

A metrically complete verse is called acatalectic, and one that lacks a syllable is catalectic. The septenarius in Latin is really an eight-foot verse that lacks one syllable; in other words, it contains seven and a half feet, or fifteen syllables. Any line may be catalectic, meaning that it lacks one or more syllables. This is a possible explanation for Chaucer's seven- or nine-syllabled lines. In his study of Latin, he would have found many examples of catalexis, and he may have attempted a similar scheme in English. The iambic dimeter, or the iambic octonarius with its diaeresis after the fourth foot suggesting two lines of four feet each, was the type of eight-syllable line written by Chaucer early in his career. The French octosyllabic line may have had a more immediate, although not an exclusive, influence, on Chaucer, but, then, the French was also derived from the Latin. As Urban T. Holmes writes:

It has been suggested that the eight-syllable verse in Old French poetry is a descendant of the Latin iambic dimeter. Stengel asserted with considerable reason, that the oldest type of the French decasyl-labic line is that divided six-four by the caesura, and that this was a continuation of the Latin saturnian (or of some other Latin verse having from twelve to fourteen syllables with an accent on the sixth, and eleventh or twelfth syllables). The French alexandrine or twelve-syllable meter may be derived from the Greek trimeter or from the iambic tetrameter, catalectic or acatalectic.[5]

Chaucer found in classical Latin prosody a system based generally on the foot in which the recurring pattern was formed by long and short syllables. Because, in English, duration of vowels was not as charac-teristic of the language as stress-accent, it was normal that the accented syllable should replace the long syllable as a basis for patterning. In fact, that is just what happened even in Latin, where accent gradually became a decisive factor. However, this did not occur until relatively late in the history of Latin verse.

The Dipody Law may be mentioned here as a possible explanation for some of Chaucer's more puzzling lines. In Latin, imitating Greek, iambic or trochaic feet might alternate with a spondaic foot. In order to distinguish the rhythm it was necessary to examine two feet instead of one. The dipody, or pair of feet, became then the unit of measure-ment. There are times when Chaucer has stressed syllables side by side, without an unaccented syllable between them. For example, from the Monk's section of the General Prologue, we have the following lines:

And I / seyde his / opin / ion / was good (183)

Let Aus / tyn have / his swynk / to hym / reserved! (188)

He was / a lord / ful fat / and in / good poynt (200)

A fat / swan loved / he best / of a / ny roost (206)

It is to be noted that each line has five feet, but that spondees interrupt

the regular iambic flow. We have said that this was suggestive of

sprung rhythm; it is even more suggestive of the need for invoking the

Dipody Law. Moreover, the use of the anceps in Latin changed the pat-

tern from iambic to trochaic. Beare explains how iambic and trochaic

patterns may alternate:

As a long is reckoned as the equivalent of two shorts, both the iambus
(u -) and the trochee (- u) are examples of a 2 : 1 ratio. Neverthe-
less iambic and trochaic verse were not actually written in accordance
with this theoretical scheme. The measure or metron was a cretic
base (- u -) with an indeterminate 'outer fall', + - u - in iambic verse,
- u -+ in trochaic verse, and this is true for as long as we can follow
the history of these metres, from the seventh century B. C. down to
the Middle Ages, as for example in Bede's careful quantitative verse:
          hymnum canentes martyrum,
It follows that the feet were not strictly isochronous; while the alter-
nate feet (even in iambic, odd in trochaic) were strictly of the value
of 3 times, the other feet might be of the value of 3 or 4 times. Thus,
while recognizing the difference between the rising rhythm of iambic
and the falling rhythm of trochaic verse, we may still speak of a funda-
mental unity of iambo-trochaic movement. Similarly in English verse,
while ten-syllable iambic (blank verse or heroic couplets) is not allowed
to change to trochaic rhythm, Milton's eight-syllable verse in L'Allegro
passes easily from one to the other:
          The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
          Zephyr with Aurora playing,
without disturbing our sense of the basic unity of the rhythm. [6]

In the General Prologue, Chaucer occasionally interrupts the regular iambic flow to interject a trochaic line. That he does this deliberately and not through lack of "maistrye" is evident from the fact that in other similar sentences he avoids a change of pattern. For example, the line which has been the subject of much comment, line 294:

> Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed

is followed six lines later by

> On bookes and on lernynge he it spente (300)

where the iambic pattern is produced by opening the line with a mono-syllable. When a line is begun with a stressed syllable, such as "twen," it falls into a trochaic pattern; by adding "on" Chaucer caused the iambus to reappear. He could have introduced a monosyllable in line 294 but evidently he did not choose to do so. The line begins with a cretic, without, however, what Beare calls the "outer fall," or anceps, which could be long or short, at will. This line is generally classified as acephalous, thus restoring its iambic nature by considering "twen" as equivalent to the second syllable of a headless foot. It is possible that Chaucer, following the cretic base, considered himself at liberty to omit a syllable already optionally long or short; in other words, a syl-lable where choice could be exercised. In this particular line, there is also the question of the pronunciation of "twenty" where the original

"two" might form the unstressed first syllable. This argument, however, will not hold for other similar lines where an accent on the first syllable is unquestionable. Line 46 of the General Prologue is as follows:

> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.

In this line one might use the final -e of the preceding line to make an initial unstressed syllable and thus maintain an iambic first foot, although the remaining feet would fall with difficulty into this pattern. It is more likely that Chaucer was using the Latin custom of varying iambic and trochaic feet within the line. His purpose would be to relieve monotony by taking advantage of a Latin poetic practice adapted to English. Moreover, he was forming his own prosody, creating an English prosody from foreign models with the adaptations required by the nature of his language. His various devices to procure variety and freshness in his lines do not preclude a regular metrical base, but rather draw attention to it by each poetical departure. English, as it was spoken in Chaucer's day, when inflections had given way to monosyllabic interpolations, readily fell into an iambic pattern due to the stresses on word-roots being preceded by an unstressed article or preposition. Natural as the iambic pattern was and is, however, its continuance for thousands of lines, broken only with apparent intent, cannot be due to chance.

Latin, with its Penultimate Law which states that the second last syllable of a word bears the accent if its vowel is long, and the third last if the vowel of the second last is short, would more readily be trochaic. At least, the line endings would contain one or more unaccented syllables. Since the accent was not of any or of major consideration but rather the quantity of the vowel, until after about the second century A. D., this Penultimate Law would not influence the metre.

Latin feet are, in certain cases, more complicated than the feet now commonly used in English poetry. For example, the bacchiac was u - -. The choriambus was - u u - . The dochmius was even more complex: u - - u - . A repetition of such feet, or their inclusion in a line of verse, would seem irregular to English ears. Efforts would no doubt be made to "regularize" such lines. The pattern is larger than we are accustomed to hear. One may hypothesize that in some of Chaucer's more difficult lines, he was attempting standard Latin feet transferred from a quantitative to an accentual basis. Even without reference to any particular metrical pattern, the principle of alternating various types of feet in one verse was a Latin practice that established an imitatable precedent.

Again, the rules concerning the anceps, the fact that spondees could be used in place of trochees, or that two short syllables might replace a long--all of these would lead to an irregular number of

syllables and, apparently, of accents. That such exchanges and re-
placements were considered correct in Latin may explain some seem-
ingly extra or faulty syllables in Chaucer's lines. The concluding line
of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale, for instance, brings an abrupt change
in the metre that had been continuing for many previous lines. The
change is so noticeable, and so impressive, that it seems intentional:

> And there a poynt; for ended is my tale.
> God sende every trewe man boote of his bale!

This last line suggests an Ionic a maiore. The pattern is, in quantity,
- - u u, given two and a half times; or in stresses, ' ' u u , given the
same number of times. The line may be scanned solely with the base
in mind, as regular, but the obvious emphases incline one to the follow-
ing scansion, which is Ionic a maiore:

> God sende every / trewe man boote of / his bale!

Chaucer, having to invent most of his own rules for English verse,
drew from French, Italian, and Latin prosodies. As John Edwin Wells
states:

In accepting these groupings one must remember that the Italian in-
fluence on Chaucer held in the last period or periods; that the Latin
and the French influences survived until Chaucer's death--Ovid re-
mained ever powerful, Latin writings were always drawn on. . . .[7]

However, Latin poets themselves had begun to adopt new forms of
versification and these forms, frequently embodied in the Liturgy of
the Church, could not fail to influence so receptive a listener as Chau-
cer.

The classical style of Latin poetry, based on quantity, gradually gave way to a new prosody based on accent. There are various schools of thought regarding the change, why it occurred, and how it developed. The only undisputed fact is that it had been completed by the twelfth century.

George Saintsbury approaches the subject in these words:

From no Roman critic, so far as I know, have we any notice whatsoever of that insurrection or resurrection (whichever word may be preferred) of accentual against quantitative rhythm which is one of the most interesting, and certainly one of the most mysterious, phenomena of the literary history of the world. Grant that early in the third century (if that be the right date) no cultivated student was likely to pay much attention to the barbarous rhythms of a Commodian, to be prepared even to consider audite quoniam propheta de illo praedixit as a hexameter. But a hundred and fifty years later things were different. [8]

Saintsbury makes several significant points here: that the subtle process whereby quantitative verse became accentual was not mentioned by Latin critics; that the third century, as the date of this change, is not definite; and that such an alteration on the basis of Latin prosody is considered "one of the most mysterious phenomena of the literary history of the world."

Some pages later, Saintsbury implicitly hints at a reason for the change. With reference to the works of Sidonius Apollinaris, and the dawning awareness of a metrical revolution, he writes:

The metrical questions which were becoming of such immense critical importance, in consequence of the impingence of vernacular accent and rhythm on Latin, are frequently touched upon by Sidonius,

not, of course, with a full (that was impossible), but with a fair, sense of their magnitude. . . . And then he justifies himself for writing a 'tumultuous poem' on the Church of 'pope' Patiens at Lyons in hendecasyllabics (which he seems oddly to call 'trochaic triplets' here, as looking at the end only), because he wished not to vie with the hexameters of the eminent poets Constantius and Secundinus. [9]

In this account of Sidonius, the expression "the impingence of vernacular accent and rhythm on Latin" is suggestive of a reversal of the influences that had been working until then. Latin had impinged upon the vernacular; now the vernacular affects Latin. As the parent tongue, at least in the case of the Romance languages, ceased to be the language of daily speech while remaining that of literature, it became subject to influences from the spoken idiom. The non-Romance vernaculars, particularly strongly accentual ones such as the Teutonic, tended to project their intonation into the pronunciation of Latin. Men may know several languages well; they think and reason in their native tongue. This interior language, in the transfer to expression in another language, subtly makes its presence known by occasional extrusions of native syntax, words, or, in this case, accent.

William Beare mentions an important sociological factor leading to the alteration of Latin pronunciation. In his Latin Verse and European Song, he writes:

It is agreed that, amid the general breakdown of Roman society and the influx of barbarians in the third century A.D., the pronunciation of Latin was affected. The old distinction between long and short vowels and syllables was radically altered, as the Romance languages

show. . . . Latin had lost its old quantitative rhythm, and the only principle, it is supposed, which could impose a new rhythm was the stress accent.[10]

In addition to changes in pronunciation, external influences were at work. Beare, following Wilhelm Meyer, a German scholar of Speyer who began in 1891 to publish a series of papers and books and whom Beare calls "the greatest of all students of rhythmic verse,"[11] suggests the influence of Syriac verse, which was syllabic, upon the early Christian poets. Beare writes:

Another type of verse supposed to be purely syllabic is Syriac. The importance of Syriac verse for the history of the early Church is great. The theory of Wilhelm Meyer that the Christians of the West turned from quantitative to syllabic verse under Syriac influence makes it particularly desirable for us to learn, if we can, what Syriac verse was like. Unfortunately, the subject remains obscure. In 1879 the Abbe Martin published the Syriac treatise on metre by the thirteenth-century scholar usually called James of Tagrith. Here we find metres defined and classified in terms of the number of syllables in the verse, from three to twenty. Henry Burgess the author of Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephraem Syrus, 1853, classified metres of four, five, six, seven, eight, and twelve syllables to the line.[12]

Eventually the quantitative or syllabic measures of Latin poetry became wholly accentual, but the new poetry of the vernaculars varied between syllabic and accentual. French poetry has always been based on syllabism. It would seem that the old quantitative measures were, in various vernaculars, replaced by diverse forms of poetry: syllabic, or accentual, or syllabic-accentual.

F. J. E. Raby discusses the syllabic influence with reference to

Syriac, also citing Meyer. He then enlarges on the nature of what

he calls "rhythmical verse," which he considers as one of the

stages between quantitative and accentual verse. After quoting the

first strophe of Augustine's Psalm against the Donatists, Raby writes:

In this hymn we see more distinctly than in Commodian the appearance
of a new kind of poetical construction. For there is no clear evidence
that the popular verse of the Romans was other than quantitative; rhyth-
mical verse in the West was entirely a Christian possession and it was
never employed by pagan writers. Its principle is the strophic group-
ing of lines which contain an equal number of syllables, and are divided
by a fixed caesura, and frequently there is the constant or sporadic
ornament of a more or less developed rime. The basic characteristic
of this early rhythmical verse is the numbering of syllables, which de-
cisively differentiates it from classical verse, but relates it, in
Meyer's opinion, to Semitic poetry, and in particular to Syriac hymns
like those of Ephrem Syrus. [13]

Raby says that Augustine "stands between the ancient world and

the Middle Ages as the first great constructive thinker of the Western

Church," and "possessed to the full the mastery of those qualities which

ally the rhetorician so closely to the poet." Augustine deeply loved

Latin classical poetry and was perfectly familiar with its prosody. That

his Psalm against the Donatists should have been constructed with new

prosodic principles in mind, points to a suggestion of change in Latin

poetry:

> Omnes qui gaudetis de pace, modo verum judicate.
> Abundantia peccatorum solet fratres conturbare.
> Propter hoc Dominus noster voluit nos praemonere,
> Comparans regnum coelorum reticulo misso in mare.
> Congreganti multos pisces, omne genus, hinc et inde:
> Quos cum traxissent ad littus, tunc coeperunt separare,
> Bonos in vasa miserunt, reliquos malos in mare.

> Quisquis novit Evangelium, recognoscat cum timore.
> Videt reticulum Ecclesiam, videt hoc saeculum mare.
> Genus autem mixtum piscis, justus est cum peccatore.
> Saeculi finis est littus: tunc est tempus separare.
> Quando retia reperunt, multum dilexerunt mare.
> Vasa sunt sedes sanctorum, quo non possunt pervenire.

The lines generally contain sixteen syllables, divided after the eighth syllable by the caesura. There is a regular accent falling on the second last syllable of each half-line. Even allowing for elision or hiatus, we find some 9-syllabled or 7-syllabled half lines. Accent and quantity are frequently disregarded. Every line ends in "e" or "ae," thus forming a one-syllable rhyme.

Although Augustine stands near or at the beginning of a new form of Latin poetry which Raby has called rhythmical, his own concept of rhythm and metre are worth noting. In Augustine's Latin textbook on musical rhythm, called De Musica, written around the year 388 A.D., he clearly distinguishes between rhythm and metre:

When we have a continuous succession of definite feet, which is spoiled if unsuitable feet are introduced, it is rightly called rhythm, i.e., number; but because this succession has no limit and no particular foot has been selected to mark an ending, this absence of measure in the series does not allow us to call it metre. For metre involves two things: it proceeds by definite feet, and it has a definite limit. And so it is not only metre because of its fixed limit, it is also rhythm on account of the orderly combination of its feet. Thus all metre is rhythm, but not all rhythm is metre. In music the word rhythm is so wide in its scope that everything therein which concerns the longs and shorts is called rhythm.[14]

This passage answers a great many questions about rhythm and metre. According to Augustine, the main distinction between the two

was that metre had a definite number of feet whereas rhythm could

vary the number of feet in a line. In other words, in metre the pat-

tern was repeated a definite number of times; in rhythm it was not.

Otherwise, rhythm and metre were identical. Later, in the eighteenth

century, poets regularly used the term numbers for metre. Here

rhythm is equated with number and this gives a new perspective on

the accepted meaning of the term which even in Augustine's day had

"so wide a scope."

In another section of De Musica, the same teaching is repeated:

Between rhythm and metre there is this difference, you have said:
that in rhythm the series of feet has no fixed limit, but in metre it
has. The combination of feet is common to rhythm and metre,
therefore, but in the one case it is without limit and in the other
case it is limited.[15]

In the fourth century, then, rhythm and metre had the same basis,

but metre had a definite number of feet.

St. Ambrose is generally recognized as the first great composer

of Christian Latin hymns. In fact, his name is so closely associated

with them that the term "Ambrosian" came to mean hymn, although

Bede, in his De Arte Metrica, "seems to limit the meaning particu-

larly to hymns in the iambic dimeter used by St.Ambrose."[16] Proso-

dists are agreed that the hymns actually composed by St. Ambrose

were in the classical Latin tradition, that is, based on quantity. Au-

gustine, in his Confessions (XI, 27) discusses one of the most famous

of the hymns composed by St. Ambrose, the Deus creator omnium.

He writes:

Deus creator omnium: This line is composed of eight syllables, short and long alternately: the four short syllables, the first, third, fifth, seventh, are single in relation to the four long syllables, the second, fourth, sixth, eighth. Each long syllable has double the time of each short syllable. I pronounce them and I say that it is so, and so it is, as is quite obvious to the ear.

These verses are in classical metre, as will be seen by examining

the first quatrain:

> Deus creator omnium
> polique rector, vestiens
> diem decoro lumine,
> noctem soporis gratia.

Beare, in speaking of the Ambrosian hymns, states:

The best-authenticated hymns of Ambrose are purely metrical; they obey the dipodic law; they show elision, not hiatus; there is no sign of an attempt to make the word-accent coincide with the metrical beat, either in the interior or even at the end of the line. . . .[17]

These lines from the fourth century were sung "in the triple mea-

sure of iambics," as Dom Gregory Murray notes, but so were the

lines cited by Bede two centuries after Ambrose:

> [O] rex aeterne Domine
> rerum creator omnium
> qui eras ante saecula
> semper cum Patre Filius.

In this quatrain we sense a new beat emerging and a disregard for

the quantity of some of the syllables. Hiatus must be introduced be-

tween "qui" and "eras." Also "eras" is an iambus if judged quanti-

tatively, but accentually it is a trochee. The accentual reading evident-

ly gives the desired scansion since it alone produces regularity. Bede

points out, in effect, that although this verse differs from the classi-
cal, quantitatively correct, lines, the difference is inconsequential
when the hymn is sung, since the length of the musical note, on the
accented syllable, produces the same rendering as the original method
of length of syllable would have done. In the eleventh century, Guido
of Arezzo said: "We often sing according to the scansion of the line
in feet, so to speak, as happens when we sing the metres themselves."[18]

From the time of Ambrose, to Bede, then to Guido, seven centu-
ries elapsed. Latin metre was changing from quantitative to accentual,
and yet the singing of hymns carried on the tradition with the length of
syllables as the length of sung notes. The difference in prosodic basis
did not affect the music. A long syllable or an accented syllable could
have two beats in music. The new accentual basis which was begin-
ning to replace quantity was thus disguised, as it were, by the length
of the musical note. Both accent and quantity could occupy the same
time in music, although in recitation the difference would ultimately
become obvious. However, hymns were composed for singing.

With the advent of organum around the tenth century, and even
more so of discant and polyphony a little later, the equation between
metrical length and musical length gradually weakened. However,
by this time, the majority of Latin poets had completed the shift to
accentual verse.

L. R. Lind, after listing the contributions of Rome to our civilization, concludes:

It is in literature, however, that Rome's force is felt today perhaps more strongly than in the other ways in which she influenced posterity. This influence began with the close of classical antiquity somewhere between the sixth and the ninth centuries and has continued to our time. The literary types, imagery, figures of speech were Roman; the liberal arts of the university curriculum, the entire fabric of medieval rhetoric were Roman. The Roman Muses inspired the poets of the Middle Ages in the new forms they created--the hymn, the sequence, the modus or prosa, and the new types of verse-forms with their intricate variations. [19]

The sequence, mentioned by Lind, has been called "the most important rhythmical creation of medieval Latin," [20] and "the most characteristic achievement of medieval poetry." [21] It formed a part of Church Liturgy and was sung between the Epistle and the Gospel in Church services. It was, therefore, familiar to all worshippers. The origin of the sequence is obscure, although for a long time Notker Balbulus (circa 840-912) was given credit for its creation. In 851, Notker received a monk from Jumièges whose monastery had been sacked by the Northmen. This monk carried with him an Antiphonary in which Notker found what might be called a Sequence. Raby declares that France had already had this form of composition:

What is certain is that by Notker's time the composition of Sequences on French soil had already reached an advanced stage, especially at such centres as Luxeuil, Fleury, and Moissac. [22]

There is a relationship between the clausula and the sequence, inasmuch as the first sequences were built up from the clausulae sung on

the final a of the alleluia before the Gospel at Mass. Since se-

quences were formed by combining clausulae, the metric customs

pertaining to the clausula were adopted by sequence writers until

the sequential convention became established. The first sequences

had, then, begun as prose. Two centuries later many sequences dis-

played all the characteristics of accentual verse. Indeed, one could

trace the history of prosody by the Sequence alone. It had its non-

rhythmical beginnings, its transition period in which new features

were observable, and its completed accentual and metrical form in

the twelfth century. At the conclusion of its development, a develop-

ment to which the name of Adam of St. Victor is especially attached,

the Sequence measure consisted of several lines in trochaic tetram-

eter acatalectic. The following lines, from Adam of St. Victor's

In natale Salvatoris give an example of the perfected form.

> In natale Salvatoris
> angelorum nostra choris
> succinat conditio:
> armonia diversorum
> sed in uno redactorum
> dulcis est connexio.

The coincidence of accentual stress and metrical ictus is with-

out exception. Quantity is not taken into account except to locate the

accent according to the penultimate law, which states that the last

syllable but one bears the accent if it is long, and if it is short, the

last but two. The caesura occurs regularly, and always at the end

of a word. The rhyme is at least two-syllabled. The number of

syllables is generally constant and follows a pattern of 8 - 8 - 7.

If there is any change in stress it occurs only in the seven-syllabled

line. In the twelfth-century Sequence, then, the prosodic change in

Latin, begun around the third century, has been completed.

In addition to the poems of Adam of St. Victor, several other

medieval Latin compositions are noteworthy for the perfection of

their form. They are sung at liturgical functions to this day. The

Stabat mater, attributed to Jacapone da Todi, who was born about the

year 1230, is one of the most famous:

> Stabat mater dolorosa
> juxta crucem lacrimosa,
> dum pendebat Filius;
> cujus animam gementem
> contristatam et dolentem,
> pertransivit gladius.
>
> o quam tristis, et afflicta,
> fuit illa benedicta
> mater unigeniti.
> quae moerebat, et dolebat
> pia mater, dum videbat
> nati poenas incliti.

This Sequence continues for ten strophes, all reading smoothly, with

metrical stress and word stress coinciding throughout. The metrical

pattern is seen to be:

> / u / u / u / u
>
> / u / u / u / u
>
> / u / u / u /

repeated once. The rhymes are: aab ccb.

"The most majestic of medieval Sequences,"[23] as Raby calls the Dies Irae, was composed by Thomas of Celano. It is still sung today and even forms part of the liturgy of the twentieth-century Church. Three strophes will suffice to show its structure:

> Dies irae, dies illa,
> solvet saeclum in favilla
> teste David cum sibylla.
>
> quantus tremor est futurus,
> quando judex est venturus,
> cuncta stricte discussurus.
>
> tuba mirum spargens sonum
> per sepulcra regionum,
> coget omnes ante thronum.

The metre is trochaic, no doubt because of the penultimate law. The poem is noteworthy for the uniformity of its accentual stresses which recur like the tolling of the death bell to which the lines were intoned.

George F. Whicher distinguishes between quantity and accent in his summation of twelfth-century poetics:

Three types of Latin lyric were available to twelfth-century scholar-poets. The prestige of the Roman Classics was still powerful enough to inspire imitations of Ovid and Horace, which followed the time-honored quantitative meters of antiquity and copied closely the rhetoric of these admired models. But at the same time a new living poetry in Latin was being perfected by Christian poets, who in the course of several centuries of experimentation had brought Latin verse back to the natural patterns of accentual or rhythmic meter, accompanied by sonorous and often intricate rhymes. The writing of sequences and hymns bore fruit in an immense literature of sacred song, of which the powerful Dies Irae attributed to Thomas of Celano is the most famous monument, though many other fine hymns like Jerusalem the

Golden are still familiar in translation.[24]

Regular accent had now become established in Latin poetry. To distinguish the classical quantitative metre from the accentual metre, the term "rhythmic" had for some time been applied to the latter. It was not, essentially, more rhythmic than the classical metre according to Augustine's definition of rhythm, but as a distinguishing term it served to classify the new type of poetry.

Goliard poets flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. The origin of the name "Goliard" is not known. It was a term of derision, perhaps originating in gula, gluttony. It has also been suggested that it came from Goliath, the giant of the Philistines, and whose name in the Latin of the Vulgate Bible is Golias. These poets showed remarkable skill in handling the accentual metres. Although the name later became synonymous with ribald poetical jokers, some poets of eminent ability, such as Walter of Châtillon, were included among the Goliardic writers. Walter of Châtillon spent some time in England in the Salisbury group surrounding Thomas à Becket. He left England after the Archbishop's murder so that he could more freely express in verse his horror of Henry II's act. Walter manifested consummate skill in the new metres. He was the inventor of the "goliard with authority," a form of smooth, accentual Latin poem to each strophe of which was appended a line from a classical author. Here is an example of his goliardic measure with a line from Juvenal

added, a "goliard with authority":

> Missus sum in vineam circa horam nonam,
> suam quisque nititur vendere personam;
> ergo quia cursitant omnes ad coronam:
> semper ego auditur tantum, nunquamne reponam?

The meter is trochaic hexameter with an extra, unaccented syllable

at the caesura, or trochaic trimeter if the verses are written:

> Missus sum in vineam
> circa horam noman

What is noteworthy is the regularity of the beat and the ease with which

Walter of Châtillon composes in accentual Latin. The line from Juvenal

rhymes with the first three, although its metre is quantitative.

Walter de Chatillon spent some time in England and frequented

the humanist circle of Canterbury. The term "Goliard" which Chau-

cer applied to the miller when he called him "a janglere and a goli-

ardeys" had gained its pejorative connotation after Walter's day.

The great sequences and hymns with their accentual metre were

familiar to all church-goers of Chaucer's century. The accentual

verses of the Goliardic poets of more profane inspiration were wide-

spread and recited with ribald glee on festive occasions. Their in-

fluence on poetry was inescapable once the ear became accustomed

to the rhythmic rise and fall of the regular stresses.

Latin could not bear an accent on the final syllable of a word,

therefore, in the rhythmic verses the metre is generally trochaic.

To the famous iambic line, previously mentioned: O rex aeterne Domine, the "O" was later added to preserve the iambic tendency, and its following line "rerum creator omnium" is frequently mispronounced because of the innate desire to continue the iambic beat. This shows how the ear becomes accustomed to a pattern of stresses and instinctively seeks to continue it.

Chaucer had no such problem in English if he wished to use the iambus. After the Norman Conquest, with the loss of inflectional endings and the increased use of articles and monosyllables in English, its basic pattern became iambic. Chaucer had but to adapt the principle of metrical accent found in Latin to the nature of the vernacular in which he chose to write.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEUTONIC AND ROMANCE BACKGROUND

When Chaucer stood on the threshold of his poetic career, one of the decisions he was free to make was the choice of linguistic vehicle. Possibly no writer of genius before or since his day has had such liberty of time, circumstance, and ability to choose the language of his art. As Emile Legouis has written:

His immediate choice of his own dialect as the vehicle of his poetry is proof of his decision and of his sure judgment. He did not, like Gower, allow himself to be tempted either by Latin or by French. He risked his whole literary fortune on London English, the King's English, of which it has been said how poor it was. He found it a thing of naught and left it so rich that English poetry had but to add blank verse to it in order to be fully equipped. [1]

Literary critics, such as W. J. Courthope, have been accustomed to minimize or negate the influence of Anglo-Saxon poetry on Chaucer. Courthope, in his History of English Poetry, writes:

Between the poetry produced in England before the Norman Conquest and the poetry of Chaucer there is absolutely no link of connection. [2]

But the greatest "link of connection" of all is the language Chaucer used. English had developed from Anglo-Saxon and, although the language had undergone changes, its fundamental nature remained. It was a Teutonic tongue.

The Teutonic tongues are characterized by a strong accent, a heavy emphasis upon certain syllables, usually the root of the word. This marked characteristic has a direct bearing upon their prosody. In adapting verse forms from other languages into the Teutonic family, poets cannot overlook the element of stress. It is too strong and obtrudes too obviously to allow them to ignore it.

As long as English remained inflectional, it fell readily into a trochaic pattern. As it gradually changed from a synthetic to an analytic language, dropping most inflectional endings and using more articles and prepositions to replace them, the natural pattern of stress became iambic.

Although English was diverted from its regular course by the Norman Conquest, this diversion might be called a pause in its development rather than a basic change. The Norman influence, precipitated and enlarged by the events of 1066, had already penetrated England with the crowning of Edward the Confessor who had previously spent thirty years exiled in Normandy. During these years, the future English king learned to appreciate the culture of his Norman hosts, and, upon his accession to the throne of England, he was happy to surround himself with lettered men from Normandy. As Marguerite-Marie Dubois writes, with reference to Edward:

Accédant au pouvoir, il n'avait pas manqué de réunir autour de lui
et de pourvoir avec largesse ses amis normands: lettrés, soldats,
nobles, prêtres et dignitaires ecclésiastiques. Et déjà l'influence
d'une pensée et d'une ambiance étrangères se faisait sentir à la
cour d'Angleterre.[3]

French and Latin dominated the literary scene and were the lan-

guages of culture in England for at least three hundred years. Such

a cultural concentration in the Romance field could not leave the

Teutonic bases untouched. The Anglo-Saxon prosody, however, sur-

vived in what Chaucer himself, in the Parson's Prologue, called the

"rym, ram, ruff" of the north. A new form of poetry in the vernacu-

lar, that is, some type of English vernacular, likewise sprang up

and produced works which, if undeserving of the title of great, are

still noteworthy. The French influence is observable in them, but

they are English in expression and feeling. Many popular romances

began to be written in English after the year 1250.

The advent of the Hundred Years' War in 1336 lessened the pres-

tige of the French language in England. In 1362 Parliament was opened

in English for the first time since the Conquest. From 1349 on, English

gradually replaced French as the language of the schools until, by 1385,

the transfer had become complete. A good summary of the literary

and linguistic situation prevailing in Chaucer's day is given by Émile

Legouis. After discussing Higden's <u>Polychronicon</u>, written in Latin

before 1363, Legouis adds:

Higden had given a striking picture of the variety of the languages
and dialects spoken in England. He had deplored that southern and
northern Englishmen were hardly comprehensible to each other.
He had attributed the corruption of the English language to the cir-
cumstance that French alone was taught in the schools and used in
translating Latin, so that the sons of nobles were trained in French
from their cradles, and men of lowlier birth turned, from snobbish
motives, all their energy to learning French.

But Trevisa assures us that all this, which was true in Higden's
day, had been altered in 1385. For some eight years English had
replaced French in the schools. [4]

Chaucer's prosodic position became defined in a period of almost

universal transition: linguistic, social, national, political, historical,

and religious. The Middle Ages were merging with the Renaissance

without, as yet, giving clear indication of the main direction to be

followed by vast undercurrents of thought and forces of influence.

This is why it is difficult to clarify Chaucer's affinities. He partakes

of many; he shares and understands diverse cultures; he sympathizes

with opposing social classes; he appreciates numerous linguistic op-

portunities. That he metabolizes such varied fare into a peculiarly

Chaucerian element is the work of genius which has won for him the

title "the father of English poetry." It is a title which might be dis-

puted, since a surprising amount of poetry, in regular metre and

written in English, preceded him. However, Chaucer may be com-

pared with Columbus who, although not the first in his discoveries,

was the first to make them known to all men.

When Chaucer made English his choice of language for his great

works, he did so against a background of French and Latin, to

which he soon added Italian. Chaucer would also have had a good

precedent for English alliterative verse. Had not Laurence Minot,

the official bard of Edward III, used the alliterative form? Edward

III was in the midst of his reign when Chaucer was born, and Minot's

poems poems celebrating the king's military exploits were familiar

to the entire populace. It is true that Minot had added rhyme and

stanza to the native alliterative line, but his inspiration definitely

lay in the early English form. Several masterpieces were written

in alliterative verse in or near Chaucer's own century: the Brut

of Layamon, Langland's Piers Plowman, Sir Gawain, and the allit-

erative Morte Arthure. "Chaucer used alliteration as a conscious

ornament only here and there," writes Baum, and then he proceeds

to indicate the sections where this style of verse is found in Chau-

cer.[5] Among other sections, Baum selects the following:

In the battle scene of KtT (A 2601 ff.) the alliteration is a deliber-
ate imitation of the Anglo-Saxon long line; and so also in the de-
scription of the naval battle in the Cleopatra Legend (LGW 635 ff.).
There are also scattered lines which resemble the fourteenth-
century forms of the old alliterative line.[6]

Anglo-Saxon verse was based on stresses and alliteration. The

two were generally combined, that is, the stressed syllables began

with the same letter or sound. The effect was to greatly emphasize

the accented syllables. Each line was divided into two parts by a

caesura. The number of syllables in a half line could vary but the stresses were two in number. The stressed syllable, in combination with one or more unstressed syllables, constituted a foot. In general a foot was composed of an arsis and a thesis (a stressed and unstressed syllable), but occasionally an arsis stood alone. The accented syllable was one susceptible of strong stress or, if not, could be resolved into two syllables which together had the required duration. Sometimes a spondee could replace a primary accent. The unaccented part of the foot, called the thesis, was made up of any number of syllables. The two accented syllables of the first half-line and the first accented syllable of the second half-line generally alliterate. The alliteration, for the most part, was by similar consonants, but also by vowel sounds.

A revival of the old alliterative verse occurred in the fourteenth century. Once again, we see the same divided lines, the prominent alliteration, and the four outstanding stresses which are characteristic of the early poetry, not only of the English, but of all the Teutonic peoples. Ten Brink sums up these characteristics when he writes:

The peculiarities of versification common to the Teutonic races are: firstly, the metrical law, by which accent in language and arsis in verse must coincide; secondly, liberty to leave out the thesis between two arses; thirdly, the use of alliteration, which affects the most emphatic syllables of the line, two in the first and one in the second section, and indicates the unity of the verse, at the same time making

prominent the ideas of chief importance.[7]

If, in general, Chaucer rejected the alliterative form as a basic feature of his prosody, he nevertheless adopted many of the main devices of Old English verse. Because he chose to write in a Teutonic tongue, he was constrained by the strong accentual nature of the language to make "accent in language and arsis in verse" coincide. The "liberty to leave out the thesis between two arses" may explain some difficult lines of his, although, as a general rule, he avoids this situation. Four strong accents to a full line are characteristic of all his early works. Whether Chaucer derived his four-stress line from French, Latin, or Old English is not the question here so much as the fact that this type of line existed and formed part of his background. In addition to the link of language, the native verse may have influenced Chaucer in such ways as recurring stresses, the substitution of several shorter syllables for one long or stressed syllable, the admission of extra syllables between accents, and the use of kennings. A good example of his use of periphrasis, one which also shows his quaint humour, is when he remarks of the Wife of Bath: "For she koude of that art the olde daunce." Another noteworthy Old English device, litotes, is perhaps the main element of his ironic humour. In fact, litotes has become a national characteristic as when one speaks of typical British understatement. We note it even today in such poems

as T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" when he writes: "Finding

the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory." Chaucer's use of these

devices need not point to an imitation of previous works so much as

an impregnation of his mind by the character of the Teutonic language

with its accumulated semantic effects and associations.

As far as the so-called caesura is concerned, we may agree with

Saintsbury:

Chaucer, of course, makes a real use of the pause--a "pause-chart"
of any page of the Canterbury Tales would show a right cunning and
agreeable zigzag of tallies--but he is rather apt to provide a kind of
compensation-pause, as well, in the regular place. [8]

In the Old English poetry there were four main stresses or arses.

The intervening, unaccented syllables were not limited or confined to

a certain number. George Saintsbury refers to these unaccented syl-

lables when, after giving the Canute Song, he says:

Here we have the inherited licence (which will always remain but be
regulated) of inserting "unaccented" but not "extrametrical" syllables. [9]

This sentence is weighted with meaningful applications. Saintsbury

calls the extra syllables an "inherited licence" which they certainly

are if considered against the background of preceding Old English

verse. He considers that they will always remain in English, but be

regulated. This regularization has been accomplished chiefly by

equivalences where several "short," rapidly pronounced syllables

are equal in time to a "long" or slowly sounded syllable. In other

words, a time-equalization may replace a syllabic equality. In this,

Old English bore a similarity to Latin, but not to French.

Coleridge, for some reason, felt that he had invented a new form

of poetry when, in Christabel, he measured his verses by equal stresses

rather than by equal syllables, numerically considered. He did not

seem to realize that his Anglo-Saxon forbears had done the same thing.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, too, with his sprung rhythm, and his sonnets

where stresses but not intervening syllables are counted, reminds one

of Old English prosodic methods. The "liberty to leave out the thesis

between two arses" mentioned by Ten Brink is again suggestive of

sprung rhythm. Even Hopkins' famous word inscape is reminiscent of

its Anglo-Saxon origins where sceap could be "creation, shape, form."

Some critics, among them Dr. Wilfred Watson, believe that Chaucer

used sprung rhythm. The fact that they draw this conclusion shows

the powerful influence of earlier English prosodic forms on Chaucer.

Chaucer used some of the Old English poetic methods, whether

by conscious adaptation or by the tendencies inherent in his native

tongue. However, he regularized the number of syllables occurring

between arses. His main point of similarity with the early English

poetic method has already been mentioned: word accent and metric

stress coincide.

After the Norman Conquest, the old alliterative poetry declined,

although it did not cease to exist. In the meantime, a surprising quantity of Middle English poetry in which various prosodic methods, or combinations of methods, can be observed had been composed. Saintsbury sums up the situation:

For the present we shall regard as proved, to every impartial ear and eye, that rhyme, or music, or the imitation of French and Latin, or cross-breeding, or all together, had, by the inexorable and indisputable testimony of documents, substituted, between 1000 and 1200, for prosody by versicles with accent, but without appreciable metrical rhythm of the modern kind, a prosody by "feet", with rhyme, arranged on a distinct and interchangeable system, with a result of metrical rhythm not distinguishable, except in accomplishment, from that of Lord Tennyson or of Mr. Swinburne.[10]

This metrically felicitous state of affairs did not take place over night. There was a transition period.

The Poema Morale in its original form dates from about 1170. There are four hundred lines to the poem and most of these lines contain a four-stressed section and a three-stressed section; in other words, the line is the original fourteener of the ballad, if both stressed and unstressed syllables are counted. The accents are most frequently on the even syllables, giving the lines an iambic tendency. Although the number of intervening unstressed syllables may vary as they did in Old English, the poem approximates a fair syllabic regularity. Some attempts at alliteration have been made. It contains end-rhyme in couplet form. This poem may be considered as representing a transition stage between the old and the newer prosody.

The work of Orm somewhat resembles that of the author of the
Poema Morale, but Orm drops alliteration and advances to regularity
of metre. The -e must be sounded in Orm's lines to maintain regular-
ity. It is apparent that Orm, an Augustinian Canon, was influenced
by Latin metres in his work, and his model was probably the Latin
septenarius. He avoids rhyme. In an attempt to facilitate pronuncia-
tion through orthography, he doubles consonants after short vowels
so that his poems, which were intended as sermons, could be read
correctly in church by the preacher.

Legouis calls Layamon "the last of the scops and the first of the
English trouveres."[11] It may be mentioned that Layamon uses a
feminine ending for nearly every line, and that this ending was sounded.
Sometimes the ending was -e, although more often it was another un-
accented syllable of a word. From the beginning of his Brut we have
the following words as line endings:

> ihoten
> Drihten
> Chirechen
> ʒuhte
> radde
> onke
> tellen
> comen
> ahten

It is evident that the -e is given a place in the measure of equal value
with other unstressed syllables. This fact is of particular interest
since it adds weight to our theory that Chaucer likewise may have

sounded final -e.

The Proverbs of Alfred, so-called because they supposedly expressed his traditional wisdom, date from the twelfth century and are found in four MSS. The original appears to have been in one of the southern dialects. The Proverbs show a transition stage from the long Anglo-Saxon line to the short couplet.

The Owl and the Nightingale is one of the first English poems to use the octosyllabic couplet. French influence is apparent in the work, but so is the Old English alliterative form which obtrudes now and then. The author (presumably Nicholas of Guildford) knows the terminology and procedures of the English law court, and his poem is thoroughly English even while following French styles. The earliest of the two extant MSS containing The Owl and the Nightingale dates from around 1200. The following lines are from the beginning of this Cotton MS:

> Ich was in one sumere dale,
> In one suþe diȝele hale,
> Iherde ich holde grete tale
> An hule and one niȝtingale.
> Þat plait was stif an starc an strong,
> Sum-wile softe an lud among;
> An aiþer aȝen oþer sval,
> An let þat vuele mod ut al. [12]

The final -e's were generally sounded at this time. In the first line, however, the final -e of both "one" and "sumere" cannot be sounded while retaining a regular scansion, and it is evident from the extant MS of the Cuckoo Song that "sumer" was also spelled without an -e.

This, then, provides us with an example of some -e's being sounded and others silent, even in the same line of poetry. If, as appears probable, Chaucer observed the same liberty, he had ample precedent in doing so. The lines are perfectly regular, with the necessary accommodations made for elision as after "iherde" and "hule" where the final -e combines with the following vowel. The stresses fall regularly on the even syllables. The iambic metre can readily be seen in lines that require no adjustment for elision, hiatus, or the problem of -e, such as

þat plait was stif an starc an strong.

The lines are plainly in iambic tetrameter. Although this early example of the octosyllabic line is ascribed to French influence, the poem, in turn, provided an English model for subsequent poets. It was a well-known work, the debate form being immensely popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Two popular romances were Havelok and King Horn. They are probably the earliest romances in English, and are generally assigned to the second half of the thirteenth century. Their inspiration has been ascribed to Scandinavian legends. Saintsbury commented on the prosody of Havelok. He writes:

Havelok is written in the iambic dimeter couplet, which we have already seen in full swing. It has not the scrupulous exactness of The Owl and the Nightingale, and indulges very commonly in seven-syllable lines, while on the other hand it also indulges at times in the frank trisyllabic substitution of Genesis. [13]

The iambic dimeter, or octosyllabic couplets of <u>Havelok</u>, are fairly
regular in metre. Horn has very short lines which are accentually
patterned but not syllabic. There are only two accents to a line. Le-
gouis finds <u>Horn</u> "transitional between the romances of the twelfth
and thirteenth centuries and the romantic ballads of the later period."[14]

The romances became more numerous, and were generally in
rime couee or so-called "romance-six." It was usually 886886, rhym-
ing aabaab. This is the metre that Chaucer mimicked in <u>Sir Thopas</u>.
This again serves as a check upon his metre and also his pronuncia-
tion for, because he was imitating a well-known form, it is reasonable
to assume that he endeavoured to have the standard number of accents
and syllables. When an -<u>e</u> fills in the required number of syllables it
is highly probable that it was metrically syllabic. For example, the
fifth stanza of <u>Sir Thopas</u> begins with:

> He koude hunte at wilde deer,
> And ride an haukyng for river
> With grey goshauk on honde

In order to have eight syllables, the -<u>e</u>'s of <u>koude</u> and <u>wilde</u> must be
sounded. The -<u>e</u> in <u>hunte</u> is silent because it precedes a vowel. The
accent on <u>river</u> is apparently on the last syllable because the metrical
pattern is iambic. Since the over-all pattern is one of intentionally
stultifying regularity, it is most logical that the questionable points
of pronunciation or accent should be solved by reference to the general
form. This method of solving problems does not assist us when we

deal with the final -e of a line, as in <u>honde</u>. A feminine ending may be permitted in such cases without being considered extra-syllabic. This method, likewise, would not be helpful in defining a metre not previously known. It is useful here because we may assume that Chaucer's copy resembles his originals.

It is when the English lyrics are considered that the true metrical nature of medieval poetry becomes obvious. The <u>Cuckoo Song</u>, dating from about the third quarter of the thirteenth century, is noteworthy because it has been preserved along with the music to which it was sung. It is one of the <u>reverdies</u>, songs of welcome to spring, and is composed in a regular, lyrical measure:

> Sumer is icumen in,
> Lhude sing cuccu!
> Groweþ sed and bloweþ med
> And springþ þe wde nu.
> Sing cuccu!
>
> Awe bleteþ after lomb,
> lhouþ after calve cu,
> Bulluc sterteþ, bucke verteþ.
> Murie sing cuccu!
> Cuccu, cuccu,
> Wel singes þu cucþu.
> ne swik þu nauer nu!
>
> Sing cuccu, nu, Sing cuccu!
> Sing cuccu, Sing cuccu nu!

The last lines formed the burden of the song, and there were direc-
tions for singing them in parts. Both words and music are of ex-
ceptional interest and have been intensively examined. Even as late
as 1945, Dr. Manfred Bukofzer published a study on this composition.
The music is intended to be sung as a round in six voices, four tenor
entering at intervals of four measures each, and two bass, and is sur-
prisingly complex for the period of composition. The music, and pos-
sibly the words, have been attributed to John of Fornsete, who was a
monk of Reading Abbey. The metre is trochaic. It is remarkably
regular when the words are accompanied by the music. There is evi-
dence of the final -e's being metrically syllabic since they are obvious-
ly musically syllabic. If the lines are scanned as usually divided, an
extra syllable appears, an anacrusis, in the fourth line. But as they
are sung without pause from "groweth" to "nu" and from "bulluc" to
"cuccu" these lines yield eight regular syllables each. On "in" in
the first line there are three notes, the last two being together equiva-
lent in time to the first, so that "in" has two beats. The first and
second lines, when giving "in" two beats, are equivalent to eight syl-
lables. The third and fourth, as we have seen, are also equal to eight
syllables. As the voices entered at intervals of four measures, a
division into multiples of four would be necessary.

The rise of the sequence has been examined in the chapter on Latin
Poetry. The earliest known translation of a Latin sequence into Middle

English is called "Stod ho ꝺere neh." It is a rendering using a metrical and stanzaic form similar to the "Stabat iuxta Christi Crucem" (although the Latin trochaic has become the English iambic metre) as a comparison of the first stanzas of each will show:

> Stabat iuxta Christi crucem,
> stabat videns vitae ducem
> > vitae valefacere,
> stabat mater nec iam mater
> et, quid sit eventus ater
> > novo novit funere.

> Ᵹat leueli leor wid spald ischent,
> > Ᵹat feire fel wid s(cur)ges rend--
> > þe blod out stremed overal.
> Skoarn upbraid, and schome speche,
> > al hit was to sorhes eche--
> > i þoa þu was biluken al.

Such poems are exceptionally helpful in indicating the metre attempted by the English translator. They also show, by their adherence to a given pattern, which vowels were sounded and which syllables accented. The thirteenth century abounds in examples of lyrics and hymns translated from Latin or French. Since the prosody of the originals was frequently imitated, although with the necessary adaptations due to the difference in nature of the languages, English prosodic practices were evolving with the help of foreign models even before Chaucer's genius hastened the process.

English poetic studies frequently begin with Chaucer, and the fact that there is a body of English poetry from which Chaucer himself

could have drawn is scarcely realized. Even though many of the secular lyrics have not survived, since most of the poems thought worthy of preservation were religious, a sufficient number of both types of poetry has been preserved and provides remarkable evidence of the medieval English poetic art. As David Zesmer writes:

If Middle English prose, however interesting and historically important, has proved to be only intermittently satisfying when judged as literary art, the case with Middle English poetry is altogether different. Chaucer alone would be sufficient to insure its fame. But even if he were excluded from consideration, the record would still be impressive. [15]

In considering Middle English poems, an attempt has been made to emphasize those of transitional value in form, and also the earliest examples of various types. Numerous poems of more advanced technique and smoother style could be given. The abundance of thirteenth century work extant, in spite of the immense loss of manuscripts that took place in the sixteenth century, makes choice difficult.

Chaucer had examples in English of poems of many metrical forms and stanzaic types. He also had originals in Latin and French, often with Middle English translations. When he built up his own prosody, he was able to select and adapt from this abundance. He improved upon his predecessors, but did not differ from them. They used metrical patterns where word accent and ictus coincided. They sounded or silenced final -e's when the metre required it. They counted syllables or at least arranged equivalences. They translated

works from other languages into similar forms in English. Chaucer did not do otherwise. He was not the first to use metrical form in English poetry, but he was the first to make it great wherever English is spoken.

When Chaucer was born in the middle of the fourteenth century, English was once again assuming the ascendancy over French. However, the literary wealth accumulated during three centuries of close ties with the Anglo-Norman French of the ruling class in England, as well as with the continental dialects--particularly Francian, which was to become "Parisian" French--remained in England as a heritage enjoyed by all educated men. Four hundred and four works have been listed as being produced in Anglo-Norman French in this transition period between Old and Middle English. Numerous influential writings had also been composed on the continent in the various dialects of Old French. Chaucer, whose own writings reveal a close acquaintance with the major French works of his own and preceding generations, was humorously calling attention to the dialectical nature of the French spoken by his prioress when he categorized it as the French of "Stratford atte Bowe."

In Chaucer's youth at the court of Prince Lionel, French was generally spoken. Court entertainments included recitations of the French chansons de geste, romances, ballades, roundelayes, pas-

tourelles, and other highly contrived poetical compositions. French

poets on the continent had been producing intricate poetical structures

involving complicated metrical and rhyme schemes. The Provençal

troubadours had brought their lyrical compositions to England. All

these were highly esteemed and, consequently, copied, at the Anglo-

Norman court. We find English poems of these types ascribed to

Chaucer.

La Chanson de Roland is the oldest and best known of the French

epics. If, on the day of the Battle of Hastings, it was declaimed by

Taillefer, one of the minstrels of the winning side, it was no doubt

also frequently recited in subsequent years. While the English were

perhaps not too inclined to exalt Charlemagne and Roland, they must

have been familiar with the Chanson de Roland composed by some anony-

mous Frenchman of the eleventh century and which "Turoldus declinet."

The Chanson de Roland contains some four thousand verses arranged

in laisses of varying length. Each laisse, or strophe, had its own asso-

nance. The lines contained ten syllables with a caesura after the fourth.

An extra or feminine syllable was allowed at the caesura or at the end

of the line. As in all French poetry, the principle of measurement is

the syllable, not the accent, since in French the stress-accent is not

strong. The decasyllabic line used in the Chanson de Roland was con-

sidered then and later as the appropriate metre for the epic.

The first laisse of the Chanson, as given from the Oxford MS.,
edited by T. A. Jenkins, is as follows:

> Charles li reis, nostre emperedre magnes,
> Set anz toz pleins at estet en Espaigne,
> Tres qu'en la mer conquist la tere altaigne.
> Chastel n'i at ki devant lui remaignet,
> Murs ne citet n'i est remes a fraindre
> Fors Sarragoce qu'est en une montaigne;
> Li reis Marsilies la tient, ki Deu nen aimet,
> Mahomet sert ed Apollin reclaimet:
> New poet guarder que mals ne l'i ataignet!

Scanning the first two lines we have:

$$\breve{\text{Char}}\text{les} \,/\, \breve{\text{li}}\;\text{reis} \,//\, \text{no}\breve{\text{stre}}\,\breve{\text{em}} \,/\, \breve{\text{pered}} \,/\, \breve{\text{re}}\;\text{magnes}$$
$$\breve{\text{Set}}\;\text{anz} \,/\, \breve{\text{toz}}\;\text{pleins} \,//\, \breve{\text{at}}\;\breve{\text{es}} \,/\, \breve{\text{tet}}\;\breve{\text{en}} \,/\, \breve{\text{espaigne}}$$

It will be noted in the above lines that the second syllable of "Charles"

is sounded and counted as a syllable, but that the feminine line end-

ings are not considered part of the epic ten syllables. The metre is

remarkably regular, and the position of the caesura fixed at the fourth

syllable. An extra syllable could be admitted at the caesura. This

Oxford MS. was presumably a jongleur's copy. The words were sung

to simple melodies, probably varied for each laisse. We do not have

any copies of the music for the Chanson de Roland but in the "cante-

fable" Aucassin et Nicolete, the music is included and indicated what

was probably the custom for the singing of epics and romances.

A very popular French measure, the alexandrine, or twelve-syl-

lable verse, derived its name from the Roman d'Alexandre written

before 1177. Urban Tigner Holmes suggests that the "French alexan-

drine or twelve-syllable meter may be derived from the Greek trimeter or from the iambic tetrameter, catalectic or acatalectic."[16] For some reason the alexandrine was not widely imitated in English. Holmes thinks that its length made it more suitable for reading than for oral presentation. The English Horn, for example, is written in short accentual lines, whereas the trouvère Thomas who wrote Horn et Rimenhild employed five thousand alexandrine lines.

With the occasional exception of the alexandrine, the ten-syllable line remained the standard epic line in French. Only the twelve- and ten-syllable line had a caesura. For other types, such as lyric or religious poetry, or for the romance, eight-syllable verse was used. This line had most influence on Middle English poetry and was frequently imitated. Rhymed octosyllables were used for the Chronicles when they were in verse. Many of the popular romances, which members of the court delighted in hearing, were in the eight-syllable lines. It was a convenient length for recitation, and had become familiar by constant repetition. This is the form of poetic line used by Chaucer in his Book of the Duchess. The octosyllabic line was customarily employed for a romantic narrative type of poem and Chaucer no doubt felt that his dream-elegy contained both romantic feeling and story.

Chrétien de Troyes presented romances on chivalric and courtly love in the koiné dialect of Champagne. His romances were so popular

that they were known everywhere. Of him, Urban Holmes writes:

The dialect used by Chrétien was that of eastern Champagne, with
an occasional Picard form. His versification was the usual one
for the romance, the octosyllabic rhymed couplet. He introduced
an innovation into this conventional meter: he was the first to
break the unity of thought in the individual couplet. He would fre-
quently end a sentence with the first line of the couplet and begin
another with the second.[17]

When Guillaume de Lorris wrote the first 4, 058 octosyllabic verses

of the Roman de la Rose sometime between 1225 and 1237, Chretien's

Cligés was among his chief sources. Jean de Meun began his continua-

tion of the poem some forty years later and brought the Roman de la

Rose to 22, 046 verses. Tyrwhitt, in about 1775, was the first to

draw attention to parallels to be found between the Canterbury Tales

and the Roman de la Rose. Later investigators broadened the search

until the opinion became widespread that Chaucer owed much of his

poetic inspiration to French writers, particularly the authors of the

Roman de la Rose. The Roman de la Rose is in the common octosyl-

labic form with rhyming couplets. It has been called the "premier

grand texte français avec lequel Chaucer entre en contact,"[18] but the

young poet had other acknowledged models, especially Machaut and

his school of French poets.

Legouis devotes many pages of his History of English Literature

to explaining how Chaucer adapted French verse forms to English words.

He emphasizes Chaucer's well-known debt to Guillaume de Machaut in

these terms:

In France, it was Machaut who chiefly propagated the poems made
in fixed forms, the ballades, roundels, chansons royales, and it
was from him that Chaucer learned to use these forms for his lyrical
verses. For his narratives and descriptions he is no less in debt
to Machaut's lays. He often also emulates those French pupils of
Machaut who were his contemporaries, Eustache Deschamps, Frois-
sart, Otto de Granson. His work is full of details borrowed here
and there.[19]

Among other poems, three Ballades of the "Knight Savosyen" com-

posed in French by Otto de Granson were translated into English by

Chaucer who added an Envoy of his own. They are entitled "Compleynt

of Venus." The first verse of the first French Ballade will here indi-

cate how faithfully Chaucer followed the original:

> Il n'est confort qui tant de biens me face,
> Quant je ne puis a ma dame parler,
> Comme d'avoir temps, loisir et espace
> De longuement en sa valour penser,
> Et ses doulz fais femenins recorder
> Dedens mon cuer. C'est ma vie, par m'ame,
> Ne je ne truis nul homme qui me blasme,
> Car chascun a joye de li loer.

And Chaucer's lines:

> Ther nys so high comfort to my pleasaunce,
> When that I am in any hevynesse,
> As for to have leyser of remembraunce
> Upon the manhod and the worthynesse,
> Upon the trouthe and on the stidfastnesse
> Of him whos I am al, while I may dure.
> Ther oghte blame me no creature,
> For every wight preiseth his gentilesse.

It will be seen that this ballade, in rhyme scheme ababbccb, is deca-

syllabic. Chaucer uses the same rhyme-scheme as the original. The

translation is not exact, for Chaucer has put his Complaint in the

mouth of a woman, whereas Granson's speaker was a man, but the

parallels between the two poems are striking.

English, as a Teutonic language, had always had an accentual

basis for its verse, but the number of unaccented syllables in a foot

often varied. Upon the English accentual basis, Chaucer imposed the

French syllabic system so that a line of poetry came to have a certain

number of accents contained in the compass of a certain number of

syllables. Except for the number of its syllables, all French poetry

is essentially the same. English poetry, by combining arses and

theses in various patterns, and also varying the number of syllables,

produced numerous forms of verse.

French writers of the Middle Ages composed several well-known

works on the art of poetry and versification. Whether or not Chaucer

had access to the actual works is not known, although he certainly

had a knowledge of their contents. "He knew the medieval rhetori-

cians and adopted some of their devices or used them spontaneously,"

writes Baum.[20] The name of Geoffroi de Vinsauf, the author of the

Poetria Nova, occurs when Chaucer writes:

> O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
> That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
> With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,
> Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,
> The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?

(Nun's Priest's Tale, 3347-51)

The lines not only contain Geoffrey's name, but they are a humourous adaptation of Vinsauf's specimen of a rhetorical lament.

The rules of these rhetorical works were those commonly taught in the schools; they reveal the poetical ideal of the day. In the Laborintus of Evrard l'allemand, the rules of simple "rythmes" are given. Evrard studied at Paris and Orleans and wrote his Laborintus after Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, sometime before the year 1280. Evrard's poetic doctrine has been declared similar to that of the Ars Versificatoria of Matthieu de Vendome and that of the Poetria Nova.

Evrard gives models for spondaic lines of from four to eight syllables. Edmond Faral explains in a footnote to the Laborintus that the spondee, in the terminology of medieval rhetoricians, was formed by the succession "d'une tonique et d'une atone, l'iambe par la succession d'une atone et d'une tonique."[21] In other words, a spondee was what we would now call a trochee. The iambus was our customary slack-stress pattern. What is most significant, for our purpose, is Evrard's section entitled "Rhythmes composés." Here he gives combinations of metric patterns such as: A spondaic octosyllabic line followed by an iambic heptasyllabic line; an iambic heptasyllabic line followed by a spondaic hexasyllabic line. There are numerous other combinations. The examples are in accentual Latin poetry.

Such a poetic doctrine, whereby the poet need not confine himself to the same metrical pattern through even a whole stanza may throw light on some of Chaucer's practices. Because he began a poem in iambic pentameter, for example, did not oblige him to preserve the iambic movement throughout. It has frequently been noted that Chaucer suddenly becomes trochaic after many iambic lines. The change has been attributed to his desire to vary the beat in order to avoid monotony, and this may well have been his reason. It has also been ascribed to our lack of exact knowledge of pronunciation, to scribal errors, and other causes. Actually, since poetic art permitted the combining of different metrical patterns, there would have been no reason for Chaucer to preserve the iambus throughout an entire poem. It is true that in the examples given by the rhetoricians for these alternations of metre, the recurrences are part of a regular pattern, and that the changes in Chaucer's metre are irregularly spaced. However, licence to vary the measure may have been used, since books on versification exemplified the practice.

Chaucer's general indebtedness to French prosody has never been denied. From it he seems to have acquired an appreciation for syllabic regularity. In French, certain types of poetry required a certain number of syllables: ten or twelve for the epic, eight for romances. We find Chaucer choosing his syllabic pattern in accordance with this custom.

Foreign influence on English prosody was very great, not only due to the Conquest, but to many socio-economic factors. The pre-eminence of the Provençal school of poetry had caused its lyric forms to be widely imitated at the English Court of Eleanore of Aquitaine and later. The influence of the Provençal poets again assumes great proportions when we turn to a consideration of the Italian poetic background of the fourteenth century. Provençal poets had been welcomed at the Italian courts in the thirteenth century and, after they had communicated their style to the Italian troubadours, some of whom for a time even used the Provençal language, their art penetrated into popular songs or was carried on by the Lombard school. The Norman Conquest of Sicily and South Italy had provided further communication between Norman England and Italy. The so-called Sicilian school of poetry became one of the most influential. In this school, the Provençal canso became the canzone.

The Italian emphasis on stanzaic form, the elevated style, and intricate rhyme schemes, found an echo in Chaucer's work. His invention of rime royal strongly suggests the Italian canzone rhyme scheme. The scheme, ababbcbc, which Chaucer used in the Monk's Tale, suggests Italian influence.

Chaucer's first visit to Italy took him on diplomatic business to Venice, Genoa, and Florence. He left England on December 1, 1372,

and returned on May 23, 1373. Discounting traveling time, this would have given him about four months in Italy, time enough to inquire into the literary interests nearest to his heart. He also brought home with him copies of many Italian writings. Dante had been dead for more than fifty years, but the city of Florence to which he and Cavalcanti had brought the dolce stil nuovo, and from which he had been exiled to die in Ravenna, resounded with his praises. The entire century was overshadowed by the majesty of the Divina Commedia.

The metre of the Divina Commedia was invented by Dante. The lines are hendecasyllabic and are arranged in interlocking threes so that the scheme is called terza rima. Two tercets from Canto I of the Purgatorio will show how the metre is applied:

> Per correr migliori acque alza le vele
> omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
> che lascia dietro a se mar si crudele;
> e cantero di quel secondo regno
> dove l'umano spirito si purga
> e di salire al ciel diventa degno.

The Italian accent is not as strong as the English. In order to count eleven syllables in, for example, the first line above, the vowel endings must combine to form one syllable, so that the line is divided as follows:

```
  1    2     3     4     5     6   7    8    9  10  11
Per cor- rer mig- liori ac que alza le ve- le
```

There is generally a division of the Italian line after the fourth or sixth syllable. The tenth syllable must have the tonic accent, but the metric base is syllabic rather than accentual. This poetry has been called "numerical rhythm."

Since Thomas Tyrwhitt in his "An Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer," written in 1775, first suggested that the Italian hendecasyllable was Chaucer's model for the lines of the Canterbury Tales, this investigation of Dante's lines is pertinent to our study. The hendecasyllable contained, when regular, eleven syllables, the last one being always the so-called feminine ending. In a language such as English where there were fewer feminine endings this line could have become the decasyllabic line. Moreover, the decasyllabic line, when it ends in an unstressed syllable (or possibly final -e), frequently has eleven syllables, the last one not being counted with the regular ten. Whether or not Chaucer intentionally adopted the Italian line, he was familiar with Dante's work, and imitated him in other ways. Petrarch and Boccaccio also provided models for Chaucer to translate. By the time Chaucer went to Italy, he had already chosen English as the language of his art; but the example of Dante, especially, must have reinforced his decision to write in the vernacular. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were the most outstanding poets of the Italian Renaissance and their influence upon Chaucer was profound. As Edgar

Finley Shannon remarks:

Had Chaucer continued to follow his early French models he would
never have attained the position he occupies in English literature.
His preeminence is due in great measure to the influence upon him
of the Italian Renaissance. This great intellectual rebirth was well
under way when he made his first visit to Italy in 1372. His second
journey in 1378 doubtless served to deepen the impressions gained
from his earlier contacts.[22]

CHAPTER VII

SUMMATION

George Saintsbury, in his <u>History of English Prosody</u>, begins

a discussion of the general influences affecting twelfth and thirteenth

century writers in these words:

Let us then briefly resume the influences which were at the disposal
of a student of English prosody (had such a man existed), though it
is not to be supposed that even one such student did exist, <u>cir.</u> 1150-
1200; which at least must or may have insensibly worked upon almost
every practitioner of English verse at the time. [1]

Now, in the fourteenth century, such a "student of English prosody"

did exist, namely, Chaucer. Of the influences Saintsbury goes on to

describe: Anglo-Saxon, quantitative and accentual Latin, French,

Provençal, Scandinavian and Celtic, the greater number have been

dealt with here in some detail. Italian has also been added to Saints-

bury's list as being of importance with regard to Chaucer. The con-

clusion which Saintsbury reached, after examining all these spheres

of prosodic influence was:

For the present we shall regard as proved, to every impartial ear
and eye, that rhyme, or music, or the imitation of French and Latin,
or cross-breeding, or all together, had, by the inexorable and indis-
putable testimony of documents, substituted, between 1000 and 1200,
for prosody by versicles with accent, but without appreciable metrical
rhythm of the modern kind, a prosody by "feet", with rhyme, arranged
on a distinct and interchangeable system, with a result of metrical rhy-
thm not distinguishable, except in accomplishment, from that of Lord
Tennyson or of Mr. Swinburne. [2]

If this conclusion seemed inevitable when applied to thirteenth-century prosody, so much the more is it applicable to English versification after the advent of our greatest Middle English poet.

In examining the prosodies known to Chaucer in some or many of their representative works, the following conclusions were drawn: In later Latin, ictus and accent coincided and syllables were counted. In French, syllables were counted, their number varying according to the type of poem, mute -e was sounded, and stress accent was unimportant. In Old English, accent was generally highlighted by alliteration and was otherwise significant, intervening syllables varied in number and the caesura was consistently used. In the Middle English verse preceding Chaucer, a trend toward regularization of the number of syllables was noticed and accent and ictus coincided. In Italian, the stanzaic form predominated, syllables were counted, the hendecasyllabic line was most common, and stress accent was less pronounced than in English.

A fourteenth-century poet, such as Chaucer, was well provided, then, with examples of such prosodic elements as syllabication, coincidence of accent and ictus, regular and recurrent stress patterning, stanzaic forms, rhyme, alliteration, and assonance. He had but to choose the elements he preferred and then adapt them to the genius of the language of his poetry. Not to choose any of these would have been

a prosodic retrogression not consonant with Chaucer's ingenious adaptation of other elements in the works of the contemporary and preceding authors so avidly consulted by him.

Those who argue against a metrical base for Chaucer's lines usually adduce the difficulty of scanning every line with exactitude. However, it is neither necessary nor desirable for a poet to observe a monotonous regularity in his work. This was pointed out in Chapter I, where the establishment of the base and the aesthetically advisable divergences from it were discussed. A very great number of Chaucer's lines follow the regular patterning established for them, or digress from it only occasionally. This number of regularly stressed and syllabically correct lines is more than sufficient to establish the basic pattern required to give each work a valid classification. Exceptions to the general plan of stresses and syllables may be explained in ways which have been mentioned, such as changed pronunciation, scribal errors, sounding or not sounding of final -e, aesthetic values, hiatus, elision, or poetic licence.

In the scansion of any English poet, with the possible exception of Alexander Pope and his closest followers, prosodically puzzling verses will be found. Many of Milton's lines have baffled prosodists. Even Tennyson, so generally equal, wrote the line

Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail[3]

which defies regular scansion although it can be cramped into a pre-
conceived pattern with some Procrustean thrusts. Yet no one denies
that such poets as Tennyson have a metrical basis for their work. It
seems unreasonable to measure an earlier poet, like Chaucer, with
a more rigid rule.

That Chaucer had some metrical basis for his poetry therefore
appears likely. This basis, formed and developed by him, need not
correspond in every respect with later metres as they were under-
stood in the eighteenth and subsequent centuries. Since he was form-
ing his own prosody from various elements it is logical that some of
the practices contained in the original models should have obtruded
here and there in ways which later poets would discard. The sound-
ing of final -e at certain times is one of these. Some forms of elision
are another. The occasionally uncertain union between ictus and ac-
cent could owe its origin to classical Latin where these elements sel-
dom coincided, or to the French practice of ignoring stress accent
in counting syllables. In some prosodies the measured element was
chiefly syllabic, but in the later Latin poetry of the Goliards and in
Latin liturgical compositions, correspondence of word accent with
ictus and exact syllabic counting were found. Chaucer's practice
comes nearer to that of the later Latin poets than any other of the
models that formed his prosodic background.

Many scholars give their scansion of Chaucer's lines. I have never found two to agree on the syllables to be stressed. This is because some of them choose the rhythm of prose as the basis for marking stresses. They attempt to scan poetry as they would read it. However, the rhythm of prose is not the metrical base of poetry. Taking a base and following it as far as possible, and then accounting for the poet's desire to vary the beat of his lines for emphasis or to avoid monotony, one can find a surprising regularity in the majority of Chaucer's lines.

Our knowledge of Chaucer's pronunciation is incomplete. Varying stresses are frequently attributable to different opinions with regard to the pronunciation of Chaucer's lines. For instance, Southworth scans the second line of Chaucer's A B C:

To whom al this worlde / fleeth for socour[4]

whereas, in view of the rhymed endings of the eight-lined stanza, the last syllable was more likely stressed. Again, Paull Baum considered line I-102 from Troilus and Criseyde as one "in which the meter and the natural rhythm do not 'incorporate'".[5] When one takes into consideration the French influence on the pronunciation of the key words, the line is readily scanned:

So aun / ge lik / was hir / natif / beau te

The evidence with regard to the sounding of final -e, both in Chau-

cer's practice and from the poetry available to him, inclines one to believe that Chaucer pronounced the -e sometimes and left it mute at others. He had the example of French -e sounded in poetry but not in everyday speech. He also had the example of Latin -e forming a counted syllable. The time of the disappearance of inflectional -e in English is a controversial point; but its possible literary use for a short period after lapsing from daily speech is consonant with literary practice before and since. For example, right into our century, "thou" has been used in poetry, although it ceased long ago in daily speech.

It has been seen that sustention of the iambic-decasyllabic nature of Chaucer's lines is possible with many adjustments and provisos. However, to consider Chaucer's work as metrical without confining the concept of metre to the strict regularity which later became accepted in English prosody requires fewer adaptations. That Chaucer had some metrical basis for his versification seems more plausible, in view of the metrical prosodies with which he was familiar, than that he should have written with no prosodic scheme in mind. C. S. Lewis concludes "I suspect that his verse was a precarious metrical balance of different metrical forces."[6] Certainly the iambus dominates the greater number of his lines. Equalization of syllables is also possible in the majority of his verses. Whether Chaucer's modus agendi

was to balance stresses and count syllabic feet is not known for sure.

He himself has revealed that syllable count was part of his scheme,

and when he speaks of "cadence" the suggestion of the accentual pattern-

ing of the clausula is made. It would seem that the weight of evidence

as to whether Chaucer had a metrical basis for his prosody is in the

affirmative. The exact nature of this metrical basis is a further con-

sideration. Part of the problem in treating of Chaucer's prosody re-

sults from looking at his work through the windows of eighteenth-century

metrical regularity. The "rocking-horse" lines that replaced the poetic

gallop of a Pegasus somewhat warped English ears to the possibility of

a metrical poetry that allowed reversion of accent or sprung rhythm

or syllabic equivalences.

Attempts to constrain Chaucer's lines to some strict metrical

form have been surprisingly successful, although this success has not

been so convincing as to obviate all doubt. It may be that the form

itself, arbitrarily chosen and dogmatically applied, is questionable.

That Chaucer used some metrical form seems certain, but this form

need not correspond with present ideas of exactly regular feet and

syllabication.

The metrical basis of Chaucer's prosody has been denied in our

day; but Chaucer knew prosodies founded on a metrical basis, particu-

larly the Latin. It is most probable that he devised a metrical scheme

for his own work. Exactly what this metrical scheme was could form the subject for further study.

Part of the problem of Chaucer's prosodic basis lies in the desire of scholars to have a completely clear case for or against his use of metre. This they cannot obtain, and, consequently, opinions are divided as to Chaucer's use or disregard of metre. The solution seems to lie in the concept of an underlying metrical pattern or base which, once established, allowed for frequent divergences. The very idea of metre, in Chaucer's day, as seen in the examples given from foreign poetry with which Chaucer was acquainted, varied from strict accentual-syllabic (Latin) to pure syllabic (French). In between these extremes there was room for a method whereby the ictus could coincide with an unstressed syllable (monosyllable) or fall on a normally unaccented portion of a word without appearing to distort the reading of the line. It was a sort of compromise, which showed the predominant tendency of the poet towards what became, in later centuries, the established metrical practice in English poetry. It was not the beginning (we have seen that verse could be scanned in poetry preceding Chaucer) but it was an immense development along the lines English verse later followed.

There are too many variables in the problem for the modern prosodist to produce a constant. The iambic-decasyllabic theory depends on

the sounding of final -e, which is not definitely ascertainable at this time. The scanning of Chaucer's lines depends on how he pronounced them, or on what licences he allowed himself. On the pronunciation there is much disagreement. However, the very fact that the argument about Chaucer's prosodic base is being carried on, makes it obvious that the solution is not immediately forthcoming, or indubitably perceptible to all. One can only say that the internal evidence from the works themselves and external evidence from the works of foreign origin incline the student to accept the metrical basis of Chaucer's prosody as being the most logical solution to the problem.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]Historical Manual of English Prosody, 6.

[2]English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey, 19.

[3]The Metre of English Poetry, 5.

[4]Historical Manual of English Prosody, 26.

[5]"Chapters on the Metric of the Chaucerian Tradition." Discussed by Eleanor Prescott Hammond, English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey, 83-84.

[6]Chaucer's Verse, 36.

[7]"Chaucer's Prose Rhythms," PMLA, LXV (June, 1950), 580.

[8]The Founding of English Metre, Introduction. 4, footnote 1.

[9]The Physical Basis of Rime, 235.

[10]Sidney Lanier, The Science of English Verse, 167.

[11]M. A. Bayfield, The Measure of the Poets, 7.

[12]Verses of Cadence, 1-2.

[13]The Founding of English Metre, 6.

Chapter II

[1]Dryden, Preface to the Fables. The Poems and Fables of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 528-29.

[2]Donaldson, "Chaucer's Final -E," PMLA, LXIII (December, 1948), 1101-1124.

[3]Southworth, "Chaucer's Final -E in Rhyme," PMLA, LXII (December, 1947), 910-935.

[4]Southworth, _Verses of Cadence_, 5.

[5]C. S. Lewis, "The Fifteenth Century Heroic Line," 28-41.

[6]_The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer_, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961.

[7]Paull F. Baum, _Chaucer's Verse_, 24.

[8]_Canterbury Tales_, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948.

[9]Sidney Lanier, _The Science of English Verse_, 168.

[10]Thomas Tyrwhitt, "An Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer," lxxv.

[11]"Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages," _Speculum_, XI (1936), 88-110; "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery," _Speculum_, XIII (1938), 413-432.

Chapter III

[1]Courthope, _A History of English Poetry_, 108.

[2]"Chaucer's Prose Rhythms," _PMLA_, LXV (June, 1950), 581.

[3]Introduction to _The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer_, xxx.

[4]_Verses of Cadence_, 5.

[5]op. cit., 581.

[6]Baugh, _History of the English Language_, 292.

[7]Hammond, _Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual_, 485.

[8]A. H. Marckwardt, _Introduction to the English Language_, 252 et seq.

[9]Ibid., 253-4.

[10]Jeanne Varney Pleasants, _Etudes sur l'e muet_, Preface, i.

[11]Courthope, _A History of English Poetry_, 110.

[12]Hammond, ed., English Verse Between Chaucer and Surrey, 20.

[13]Lanier, The Science of English Verse, 169-170.

[14]Hamer, The Metres of English Poetry, 13.

[15]Saintsbury, History of English Prosody, 39.

Chapter IV

[1]Saintsbury, History of English Prosody, 139.

[2]Macaulay, ed., The Works of John Gower, cxx.

[3]Ibid., cxx.

[4]Southworth, Verses of Cadence, 59.

[5]Parliament of Fowls, 680-699. In this and subsequent references to The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Robinson's second edition was used.

[6]Sitwell, Alexander Pope, 217.

[7]Canterbury Tales, 3163-3171.

[8]Book V, 1793-1798.

[9]Chaucer's Verse, 123.

[10]1090 - 1100.

[11]Saintsbury, History of English Prosody, 150.

[12]Legouis, A History of English Literature, 134.

[13]Chaucer's Verse, 4.

[14]Beare, Latin Verse and European Song, 206.

[15]Baum, Chaucer's Verse, 5.

[16]Ibid., 5.

[17] The Prosody of Chaucer and His Followers, 7-18.

[18] Beare, Latin Verse and European Song, 193.

[19] Ibid., 197.

Chapter V

[1] Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, xxv.

[2] Halporn, Ostwald, and Rosenmeyer, The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry, 62-63.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 84.

[5] Holmes, History of Old French Literature, 8.

[6] Beare, Latin Verse and European Song, 79-80. Beare is here discussing Greek verse, but his remarks are also applicable to Latin since it was modeled on Greek.

[7] A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 623.

[8] Saintsbury, A History of Criticism, I, 364.

[9] Ibid., 384.

[10] Beare, 56.

[11] Ibid., 209.

[12] Ibid., 96.

[13] Christian Latin Poetry, 21.

[14] De Musica III, 1. (Translation from the Latin is by Dom Gregory Murray.

[15] Ibid., III, 7.

[16] Dom Gregory Murray, "Gregorian Rhythm in the Gregorian Centuries," 5.

[17]Beare, Latin Verse and European Song, 228-229.

[18]Dom Gregory Murray, op. cit., 5.

[19]L. R. Lind, ed. Latin Poetry in Verse Translation, xxxiv.

[20]Beare, Latin Verse and European Song, 277.

[21]Raby, Christian Latin Poetry, 348.

[22]Ibid., 213.

[23]Ibid., 443.

[24]Whicher, ed., The Goliard Poets, 2.

Chapter VI

[1]Legouis and Cazamian, History of English Literature, 131.

[2]A History of English Poetry, Vol. 1, 4.

[3]La Littérature anglaise du moyen âge, 87.

[4]History of English Literature, 100.

[5]Paull F. Baum, Chaucer's Verse, 56.

[6]Ibid., 56.

[7]History of English Literature, Vol. I, 22.

[8]History of English Prosody, Vol. I, 411.

[9]Ibid., 31.

[10]Ibid., 49.

[11]History of English Literature, 87.

[12]Joseph Hall, Selections from Early Middle English, 149.

[13]History of English Prosody, 69.

[14]History of English Literature, 89.

[15]Guide to English Literature, 138.

[16]Holmes, A History of Old French Literature, 8.

[17]Ibid., 177.

[18]Dubois, La Littérature anglaise du moyen âge, 152.

[19]History of English Literature, 132.

[20]Chaucer's Verse, 182.

[21]Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècles, 370.

[22]Shannon, Chaucer and the Roman Poets, 377.

Chapter VII

[1]Saintsbury, History of English Prosody, Vol. I, 25.

[2]Ibid., 49.

[3]"The Brook: An Idyl."

[4]The Prosody of Chaucer and His Followers, 30.

[5]Chaucer's Verse, 67.

[6]"The Fifteenth Century Heroic Line," ESEA, 28-41.

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